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Joseph Roth's Feuilleton Journalism as Social History in Vienna, 1919–20

DEBORAH HOLMES

FROM APRIL 1919 TO APRIL 1920, twenty-four-year-old Joseph Roth worked full time as a reporter on the newly founded Viennese daily *Der Neue Tag* [The new day]. It was his first regular job and, although he was later to become one of the best-paid journalists of the Weimar Republic, it was also the only one he would ever hold on a fixed contract.¹ In spring 1919, Roth had recently returned from eastern Galicia, the place of his origins, where he had also been stationed during the war, first in the infantry, then as an army press officer.² His position as a *Heimkehrer* in Vienna after the war was precarious for a number of reasons. Paid work was scarce in the impoverished city, and Roth had not finished—indeed, would never finish—his degree. More important, although he had already been resident in Vienna as a student before the outbreak of hostilities, the “*Ostjude*” Roth, like so many others, had no valid papers and no right to remain in the former imperial capital.³ Political parties across the spectrum were agitating for the largely Jewish refugees from the former eastern provinces of the fallen Habsburg Empire to be sent “home”—even by force, if necessary.⁴ Roth’s position at *Der Neue Tag* was therefore not only an important apprenticeship for his high-profile career in journalism—which in turn laid the foundations for his oeuvre as a novelist—but also constituted a vital existential anchor. Given their historical and biographical context, it seems surprising that the texts he produced for the new newspaper—two or three a week throughout this pivotal period in Vienna’s transition from self-assured imperial capital to beleaguered Social Democratic outpost—have received comparatively little attention in Roth scholarship.⁵ This is in part a result of the acknowledged bias in research on German-language culture and literature during this era toward the Weimar

Republic, in particular Berlin, and away from First Republic Austria: similar texts produced slightly later by Roth in and on the German capital are often studied and seem to have eclipsed the earlier Viennese texts.⁶ This article seeks to redress the balance within Roth scholarship while also suggesting what Roth's work for *Der Neue Tag* can contribute to our sociohistorical understanding of the period, despite or perhaps because of the literary techniques it uses.

As Almut Todorow maintains in her influential study of the interwar *Frankfurter Zeitung*—later to be Roth's main employer—literary historians in particular have tended to (ab)use newspapers as a Steinbruch (quarry) in their search for little-known material by particular authors or groups of authors: “The wider context of the press is generally ignored in this approach to feuilleton journalism, and little attention is paid to the nature of the source as an independent medium.”⁷ In the case of Roth's articles for *Der Neue Tag*, the character and aims of the host medium—itsself a creation of the immediate postwar period—would seem to be particularly important. In 1918, while still in military service, Roth had already written occasional articles for *Der Friede* [Peace], a pacifist journal published in Vienna under the editorship of the Social Democrat Benno Karpeles.⁸ It was also Karpeles who founded *Der Neue Tag* in March 1919, following his decision to leave the Social Democratic Party. The new newspaper was one of many press ventures launched in Vienna after World War I—Roth himself commented on “the daily newspapers and magazines that are shooting up out of the humus of public opinion like mushrooms after the downpour of revolution.”⁹ However, the associated difficulties were also many and varied: paper was rationed, there were massive energy shortages, sponsors were in short supply and potential subscribers were impoverished by war losses and inflation. In the case of *Der Neue Tag*, Karpeles's determination to overcome these problems stemmed not only from the unprecedented events of the time but also from a longer-term

dissatisfaction with Vienna's media landscape and the possibilities it offered for critical cultural and social commentary. One of his main aims was to create an alternative to what he (and many others) saw as the damaging stranglehold of the *Neue Freie Presse* on the educated middle classes.¹⁰ This hugely influential daily professed cultural and economic liberalism and internationalism, but had demonstrated extreme belligerence in the run-up to and during the war: from a left-wing and left-wing liberal point of view, it was irredeemably compromised.¹¹

The existing alternative to the *Neue Freie Presse* was the Social Democratic party organ, the *Viennese Arbeiter-Zeitung*, whose ambitions and reach extended far beyond the party faithful and workers of its title.¹² However, Karpeles—himself an editor of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* for many years—was now seeking distance from the party line. *Der Neue Tag* advocated a move away from Marxist categories and rhetoric and a nonpartisan approach to building the new Austria, one that also acknowledged the value of tradition and historical structures. In actual fact, the stated aims of *Der Neue Tag* were in many ways close to those pursued—whether overtly or de facto—by the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* since its inception in 1889: bridging the gap between the working and the educated classes, and offering a platform that was open to left-wing and progressive centrist intellectuals invested in social and political reform. However, *Der Neue Tag* used ethical and cultural rather than political terms to define the challenges of the period, at the same time outlining the need to develop new ways and a new terminology for the unprecedented situation in which Austria found itself.¹³

The first issue of *Der Neue Tag* appeared on 23 March 1919; an anonymous editorial outlining the newspaper's aims and aspirations featured on the first page of its third issue, published on 25 March 1919, the day after Karl Habsburg had finally left the country for Switzerland. Here, *Der Neue Tag* considered what was worth salvaging of the empire and how it

should be preserved; noteworthy is the way in which the war itself seems to have retreated into the background already, and postwar changes are presented as the ultimate challenge:

Will it still be possible to renew the old order and thus save the foundations of a civilization which, despite many problems and weaknesses, also brought forth greatness? Will Europe, shaken by the fever tremors of this most difficult of all crises, survive or be totally destroyed by the terrifying storm that is looming? Until now we have only viewed the disaster that is brewing and that threatens the foundations of the world as we know it through the lens of politics; accustomed as we are to the terms and words that have been handed down to us, we spoke of "bolshevism," "dictatorship of the proletariat," and the struggle of the "working class." But these terms and words have become too narrow, the movement grows and all tradition is thrown to the wind. Will we not be forced tomorrow to speak quite simply of the rebellion of all the poor, the revolt of all those who suffer after years of oppression?

It would be presumptuous to try and predict the future, even more presumptuous, however, to ill-advisedly wish for a storm that could destroy in a year what it has taken centuries to build up. But it will of course be necessary to look the looming catastrophe straight in the face and bury all our arrogance and egoism....

We have to deal with our own problems and try and save what can still be saved here. The poor and the suffering, the rebellious and the despairing are knocking on the gates of the old order; open the gates then, instead of class comrades become equal human beings, but above all, become human beings! The need and despair that can turn into rebellion tomorrow are matters that concern all of us; we are talking about our cosmic fate here,

about saving civilization from chaos. Extending equal rights and accepting equal duties is the order of the day.¹⁴

As can be seen here very clearly, *Der Neue Tag* was an attempt to poach the progressive middle-class readership of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*: a further early editorial, on the first page on 6 April 1919, calls for the *Bürgertum* (bourgeoisie, middle classes) to show “tätige Reue” (active remorse) for their role in supporting the war. They should now engage in social reform movements and political organizations to atone for their “unrühmliche Vergangenheit” (past follies). However, staging a competition for readers with the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* amounted to a “Bruderkrieg” (fratricidal battle/civil war) fought on very unequal terms, as Rudolf Olden notes in his obituary for Karpeles written in exile in 1938.¹⁵ The new newspaper was not able to stand against the party organ with all the support of the Social Democrat machinery behind it; this seems to have been one of the main reasons why *Der Neue Tag* folded after only one year.¹⁶ Founded half a year before the signing of the Saint-Germain Peace Treaty on 10 September 1919, it was discontinued half a year later. Nevertheless, despite its brief lifespan, it is not only its timing and aims that make it a particularly illuminating vantage point from which to observe developments in Vienna at this sensitive, exposed juncture. It was also able to attract an impressive stable of journalists: as well as promising newcomers like Joseph Roth, Rudolf Olden, and Egon Wellesz (the paper’s music reviewer), Karpeles engaged established, popular figures such as Egon Erwin Kisch, Anton Kuh, Alfred Polgar, and Richard Bermann.

The early issues of *Der Neue Tag* focus primarily on the limbo in which the fledgling republic *Deutschösterreich*—and in particular its capital—found itself; later issues report on the fallout from the punitive peace settlement. At the same time, from the very beginning, daily life

in Vienna is chronicled and described in a rich series of reportages that show the newspaper experimenting with existing strands of Viennese journalism in its search for new “terms and words” to express the state of the stricken capital. It is not always easy to categorize these pieces of writing. On the one hand, they are always socially aware and often socially critical; on the other, they seek to create atmosphere, they adopt a descriptive and narrative rather than analytical stance. Unlike its direct competitors, the *Neue Freie Presse* and the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, *Der Neue Tag* never featured a specific feuilleton section “unter dem Strich,” that is to say, under a thick black line two-thirds of the way down its opening pages, marking the distinction between political commentary and cultural matters or entertainment. Nevertheless, the texts to be investigated here can be understood as belonging to the elusive category of the feuilleton, a term applied to a wide range of texts from reviews to travel writing.¹⁷ Feuilleton journalism traditionally rejected any claim to objectivity and engaged in overtly subjective expressive practices.¹⁸ Nevertheless, as Hansjakob Ziemer has argued, such widely read and discussed texts constitute a means of knowledge production and transmission and are a highly relevant field of study, not just for literary but for social historians.¹⁹ It is therefore the style and methods of these pieces as much as the phenomena they describe that makes them interesting. Indeed, the topics Joseph Roth covers in *Der Neue Tag*—food rationing and black-marketeering in Vienna, the plight of refugees and returning soldiers, the energy crisis, challenges to public transport and so on—are well documented in many other ways in many other sources.²⁰ It is not what Roth tells but the way that he tells it that is illuminating for our understanding of Viennese history during this period of transition.

The remainder of this article will consider these subjective techniques and the types of knowledge they can be considered to have produced and transmitted in a selection of Joseph

Roth's earliest articles for *Der Neue Tag*, published as part of the Sunday column "Wiener Symptome" [Viennese symptoms].²¹ Throughout Roth's work for *Der Neue Tag* we can observe cumulative tension between the inherent regularity and seasonality of journalism and the need to comment on such unprecedented events as those of the immediate postwar period—a tension that is both jarring and productive, and often used by Roth to create multiple layers of meaning. On 18 May 1919, for example, he takes issue with the food supplies reaching Vienna in a piece entitled "Mai und Mais" ("May and Maize"). From its very opening, a thick associative mesh is woven, shot through with irony, producing a text that is both intriguing and yet ultimately opaque to the present-day reader: "I had almost begun to believe that there had been a printing error in the heavenly government gazette. But then, when May finally arrived after all, despite the abolition of summertime and there was maize bread on our tables once more, I savored once again, in full, flavorsome mouthfuls, the uplifting sensation of perseverance at all costs; I swam in glowing golden reminiscences of the days in which you gave gold for maize bread that was as indigestible as a war report and put the wind up you like the verdict 'fit for active service.'" ²²

Roth is unable to tell to his readers why, more than half a year after the armistice, Vienna is suddenly being supplied once again with maize instead of wheat flour—the cattle fodder of peacetime, but the only available grain during the latter stages of the war. Similarly, he cannot give them any idea where the supplies are coming from. Indeed, he explicitly discounts such objective knowledge as inaccessible and, in the final instance, irrelevant: on first glance, what matters here is the immediate experience of this supply problem: "No one knows where the maize came from. But we know more than enough about the word 'maize' and what it means."²³

Subsequently, what began as a somewhat fretful complaint about the tedious physical experience of being forced to exist on a monotonous diet turns into a riff of conjectures, parodying the

propaganda to which Vienna's population had been exposed in previous Mays during the war:

“Has it perhaps come from the stores of the Ukrainian ‘Brotfrieden’ [Brest-Litowsk] after all? Or been threshed from the ears of corn of those fields whose heirs were to be crushed underfoot? Or perhaps it was reserved on purpose during those years of the strictest rationing as a fitting May/maize gift to mark the conclusion of the peace talks?”²⁴ Roth comes to no conclusion following this series of what turn out to be merely rhetorical questions, but the language he uses simultaneously invokes and debunks the rhetoric of the war years with its murky mixture of appeals to high culture, Biblical imagery, and institutional normalcy:

Whatever the case, an artfully conceived, dramatic development is to be seen in the organization of Vienna's bread rationing over recent weeks. After the climax of white bread, the peripeteia of corn bread. Hopefully, despite all the rules of dramatic art, no catastrophe will follow. For this golden-yellow fate in and of itself is already a fitting conclusion to a gastric tragedy, a question mark after the curtain fall, addressed to Paris, a solemn reminder to over-confident small intestines, the final chord in the 42cm Haubitze Symphony, a period and pause at the end of this piece of homework on “These Great Times” that got such a bad mark ... all in all: a Viennese symptom.²⁵

This half-ironic, half-despairing list, with its touches of the grotesque (“gastric tragedy” [gastrische Tragödie]; “over-confident small intestines” [übermütig gewordene Zwölffingerdärme]) ends in the bathos of a botched piece of schoolwork, followed by the openness of not one, but two ellipses, a mannerism that had been characteristic of Viennese fin-de-siècle modernism—in particular, for example, the journalism of Peter Altenberg—and is now

taken up by Roth with Expressionist insistence. The 42cm Haubitze is a reference to heavy artillery developed in 1915 and first used by Austrian troops on the Eastern Front before featuring prominently in the May 1916 campaign in Italy²⁶; this, then, is another seasonal reference with which Roth reminds his readership of how their present privations are intrinsically linked to the military action and propaganda of the recent past. The catch-phrase “These Great Times” (die große Zeit) was not only related to war propaganda but also, since Karl Kraus’s fulminating withdrawal of support for the war effort in late autumn 1914, strongly identified with critical resistance to official versions of events.²⁷

The simple fact of the reemergence of maize bread on Viennese ration cards remains central to this text throughout, but its value as a source lies more in its self-reflective use of the linguistic conventions of wartime, which makes it a miniature, condensed study of a pervasive aspect of militarization that would merit more specific attention in the secondary literature on this period. “Official” and “popular” militarism combine in a shared pool of expressions and imagery, some of which stemmed from the authorities and the army, others from the civilian experience of war on the home front.²⁸ Roth evokes both in connection with the privations of life after the war, in an inherent yet open admonition to his readership, “lest they forget.”

“Mai und Mais” is six paragraphs long and divided into two sections of three paragraphs each. The second section bears the subtitle “Schokolade” (“Chocolate”) and also deals with the unexpected presence of a particular foodstuff in Vienna; in this case, however, Roth is writing of a contraband luxury good. And yet, in contrast to the maize bread of the first section, he knows exactly where the chocolate has come from. He gives his reader precise information, not only on its origins, but its price and where to buy it: “I saw a bar of chocolate for two crowns forty in the shop window.... It was a Zurich brand and must have been smuggled into the shop window via

the black market. . . . How many countries with borders, customs charges, regulations, validations and visitations did this bar have to traverse, before it came to rest in the shop window of the confectioner Thomas Helferding!”²⁹ But once again, Roth is playing ironically with the very notion of objective reporting. Not only is the knowledge he offers knowledge that should not be available—exact details are given for the unofficial, black market, whereas no details can be given for the maize bread on the official ration cards—but he also parodies scientific methods of presenting factual information. The “ich” of the first three paragraphs of “Mai und Mais” is joined in “Schokolade” by a second, mute figure, “a small, fair-haired girl, barefoot, hunger in her wide blue eyes,”³⁰ who stands in front of the shop window, transfixed: “At the sight of the black-brown, glistening bar of chocolate, fames vulgaris [common- or garden-variety hunger] was transformed into wingéd yearning, physical greed into a vivid longing for heaven; animal need became purely spiritual. This child’s idea of paradise must surely be: brown with wall-to-wall chocolate.”³¹ The pseudoscientific exactitude of “black-brown, glistening” (schwarzbraun glänzend) and italicized Latin is swept away by the girl’s yearning for this unnecessary foodstuff, which Roth then elevates in the rest of the piece to a symbol for a future understanding between the nations. His style remains deeply ironic—for example, he later refers to the black-market chocolate as “the black-brown glistening token of everlasting international community.”³² Nonetheless, the touching figure of the silent, wide-eyed child, with whom he then shares a bar in mute “prayerfulness”—“Unser Blick ward Gebet”—prevents the reader from ultimately dismissing his conclusions as mere wordplay. Childlike longing and whimsical imagery (“wall-to-wall chocolate”) are set up here and in other “Wiener Symptome” texts as part of a seriously meant alternative, a corrective to the militarized language of the article’s first section.

Roth performs a similar operation in “Seifenblasen,” published in *Der Neue Tag* on 10 September 1919, the day on which the Peace Treaty of Saint-Germain was signed between Austria and the allied and associated powers: “I saw children blowing soap bubbles./Not in 1913—yesterday./They were real soap bubbles. A little bottle full of soapy water, a straw, four children and a quiet alleyway in the bright sunshine of a summer morning. The soap bubbles were big, beautiful, rainbow-colored globes and they swam lightly and gently through the blue air. There was no doubt: these were real soap bubbles. Not the soap bubbles of patriotic phraseology risen up from the muddy puddles of war editorials, the nationalist party, or the press corps, but beautiful, rainbow-colored soap bubbles.”³³ The harmlessness of the central image here does not constitute escapism from either the political realities of the peace treaty or the material realities of postwar Vienna; indeed, as Irmgard Wirtz points out, the size of the soap bubbles indicates a very material reality—the renewed availability of domestic commodities for leisure purposes.³⁴ Rather, the children are used in both pieces as universalized invitations to critical thought, as embodiments of *Der Neue Tag*’s appeal to ethics over partisan politics. This is the deeper significance of Roth’s banal-sounding titles: “Seifenblasen,” “Schokolade,” “Papier,” and so on. His observations of the minutiae of daily life in Vienna, while very specific to a time and place, enable him nonetheless to comment on the larger picture through their questioning of how meaning is produced and consumed: his puns and Expressionist techniques of grotesque description and exclamation are not mere feuilletonistic decoration or the stylistic five-finger exercises of the future novelist, but rather, as Helen Chambers argues, a structural element of his production of socially critical meaning.³⁵

Therefore, although the soap bubbles do not at first seem to be a direct commentary on the signing of the peace treaty, they are nevertheless described here as symptoms of

peace, of a state of affairs that allows children once again to play and to fantasize without having to be mindful of the cost of their activities. Roth extends this imagery until it becomes a metaphor for language itself:

I think of the many soap bubbles that we saw burst during the whole, long time that ration cards and insider trading had control of all the soap and bubbles were produced, not by the mouths of children but the mouths of Siegfrieds [i.e., warmongers] and politicians. There was the soap bubble of Brest-Litovsk, the soap bubble of “rejuvenated Austria,” and finally Wilson’s fourteen huge soap bubbles, which popped when they bumped into Clemenceau in Versailles....

I know that there will always be soap bubbles of this kind. Soap bubbles of world revolution, of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But since I saw the real, beautiful, rainbow-colored soap bubbles, I look down on the other kind with scornful superiority.³⁶

By belittling the politicians and their inauthentic soap bubbles, Roth positions not only himself, but also his style of writing and the forum in which it appeared, alongside the playing children and their authenticity. “Seifenblasen” had been an accepted metaphor for feuilleton journalism before the outbreak of war³⁷; Roth continues this imagery but places his soap bubbles above political events and reporting, not below them, as was the convention of the “Feuilletonstrich.” Linguistic games and daily reality are fused in his journalism with reflections on the misuse of wordplay and the press.

Roth is very clear in his condemnation of the sensationalism of Vienna's wartime press, as demonstrated by the proliferation of the "Extra-Blätter" [special supplements] that focused on enemy losses, sometimes appearing several times a day. These also provoked the particular ire of Karl Kraus, and are parodied repeatedly in his gargantuan war drama *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* [The last days of mankind], which had begun to appear in installments after the lifting of censorship at exactly the same time Roth returned from the front.³⁸ Roth, like Kraus, criticized the way in which a substitute reality had been created by these supplements, a paper reality which could be misused all the more easily by the authorities for propaganda purposes. His satirical inversions and paradoxical conclusions are strongly reminiscent of Kraus, for example in the "Wiener Symptom" column "Papier" of 6 October 1919:

The definitive purpose of all events is: to be reported on paper. This is how reports gain dominion over history. Reports make history.

The war produced a particular form of reporting: the special report, referred to in the jargon of *Those Great Times* as the "special supplement." For a while, the "special supplement" was able to make things happen by reporting them. But then events got the better of the special supplements and left them behind. For a higher authority, the press corps, made the events, that is, wrote the military dispatches. And that was what the special supplements then reported, and they were not special any more, but official, ordered reports.

However, the people were still subject to the power of paper. The call "special supplement" put an end to all doubts. Their belief in paper remained steadfast until

the press corps fell apart and history took an unexpected nose dive, having suddenly decided to produce an event without asking the press corps for permission first.³⁹

Here Roth presents us with a kind of *Materialschlacht* [material battle] between the press and history, between paper and reality: through sheer mass, weight, and excess information, the reports got the better of history and actual events, at least for a certain period. It is not, however, clear here who bore the initial responsibility for this battle—the “paper” itself seems to be responsible, and becomes a living material, which can hold power over people. The surreal tendency of this image is, once again, not an escapist fantasy, not merely absurd; instead, it challenges the reader without Roth having to write in an overtly didactic manner. At his most critical, whether socially or politically, he remains both highly imaginative and highly personal: this approach was fundamental to his journalism from the beginning and led to his rejection of the dominant mode of *Neue Sachlichkeit* [new objectivity] later on in the 1920s.⁴⁰ As Roth claimed, for example, of the travel reportages of another prominent journalist-novelist of the period, Alfred Döblin: “His exaggerations are grotesque and therefore have greater truth value than ‘objective descriptions.’ He is not ‘objective,’ that means he is not trying to do justice to all possible views and therefore being unjust to the object itself. He is subjective, and that is why we can rely on him. And so he should have his own prejudices. For the personal prejudices of an ironist do not distort like the cool impartiality of one who writes with pathos.”⁴¹ The opening editorial of *Der Neue Tag*, while refusing to make any predictions or detailed political recommendations for Vienna’s future, had been apodictic in its appeal for the city’s inhabitants to look the impending catastrophe—or potential new world—in the face. Roth’s view on events and daily life in Vienna is straight, in that it is unapologetically personal: the most often-repeated

phrase in his “Wiener Symptome” pieces is “ich sah” or “ich sehe” (I saw/I see...). It is, however, also oblique, in that this “ich” constantly questions and points to the ways in which language shapes his view and is itself shaped by the events of the time. This self-reflexivity is at one and the same time the strength and the weakness of the feuilleton as a historical source. It is perhaps relevant to note here that although Karl Kraus had written in highly denigratory terms of feuilleton journalism before the war, the onslaught of wartime propaganda moved him to the grudging admission that the feuilleton could offer a haven for authenticity because of its very inconsequentiality, its subjective nature: “one is never so concerned with accuracy in a feuilleton, the truth can still slip through there.”⁴² Joseph Roth may have been writing after the end of the war and wartime censorship, but it still seemed vital to him to interpret rather than report on the state of Vienna during this period. Vienna had been spared direct experience of the conflict and its post-World War I dereliction was not always visible to the naked eye. However, although the fabric of the city, its buildings, and the outward trappings of imperial rule may have remained unchanged, their potential meanings—as repeatedly probed by Roth—were never to be the same again.

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¹Klaus Westermann, *Joseph Roth, Journalist* (Bonn, 1987), 24; see also Helen Chambers, “Signs of the Times: Joseph Roth’s Weimar Journalism,” in *German Novelists of the Weimar Republic: Intersections of Literature and Politics*, ed. Karl Leydecker (Rochester, 2006), 101.

²Eva Raffel, *Vertraute Fremde. Das östliche Judentum im Werk von Joseph Roth und Arnold Zweig* (Tübingen, 2002), 21–22. Wilhelm Sternburg, *Joseph Roth. Eine Biographie* (Cologne, 2009), 191–94.

³Raffel, *Vertraute Fremde*, 33.

⁴On attitudes to and treatment of the eastern Jewish refugees in Vienna after World War I, see, for example, Albert Lichtblau, “Zufluchtsort Wien. Jüdische Flüchtlinge aus Galizien und der Bukowina,” in *Weltuntergang. Jüdisches Leben und Sterben im Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Markus Patka (Vienna, 2014), 134–42.

⁵The most notable exception to this is the section on *Der Neue Tag* in Irmgard Wirtz’s extremely helpful study, *Joseph Roths Fiktionen des Faktischen: Das Feuilleton der zwanziger Jahre und “Die Geschichte von der 1002. Nacht” im historischen Kontext* (Berlin, 1997), to which the present article is in part indebted, see in particular pages 44–65. Otherwise, studies of Roth’s early journalism tend to start with the texts he wrote after his departure from Vienna in April 1920; for a recent example, see *Joseph Roth—Städtebilder. Zur Poetik, Philologie und*

Interpretation von Stadtdarstellungen aus den 1920er und 1930er Jahren, ed. Stéphane Pesnel, Erika Tunner, Heinz Lunzer, and Victoria Lunzer-Talos (Berlin, 2015).

⁶Klaus Westermann sets his early work as a journalist in a German rather than Austrian context, comparing it to that of Carl von Ossietzky, Kurt Tucholsky, and Ernst Toller. See Joseph Roth, *Journalist* (Bonn, 1987), 10.

⁷“Der publizistische Kontext wird bei diesem Umgang mit dem Feuilleton in der Regel ausgeblendet, der eigenständige Mediencharakter der Quelle wenig beachtet.” Almut Todorow, *Das Feuilleton der “Frankfurter Zeitung” in der Weimarer Republik. Zur Grundlegung einer rhetorischen Medienforschung* (Tübingen, 1996), 32–33. Although it is now twenty years since Todorow published her groundbreaking study, there is still a dearth of similar work on other newspapers.

⁸Westermann, Joseph Roth, *Journalist*, 21. Roth’s earliest-known published articles, in *Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung* in 1915, date from before his military service but already deal with the war and its effects, particularly in the eastern part of the monarchy. See, for example, Ingeborg Sültemeyer-von Lips, “Wieviel Fiktion vertragen Reportage und Feuilleton?” in Joseph Roth—*Städtebilder*, ed. Pesnel, Tunner, Lunzer, and Lunzer-Talos (Berlin, 2015), 31–59, here 32–36.

⁹“Die wie Pilze aus dem Boden der öffentlichen Meinung nach dem Platzregen der Revolution schießenden Tagesblätter und Zeitschriften.” “Alte und neue Berufe,” *Der Neue Tag*, 31 July 1919, 5.

¹⁰See, for example, Rudolf Olden’s obituary of Benno Karpeles, 1938, as quoted by Sternburg, Joseph Roth, 204.

¹¹See, for example, Albert Fuchs, *Geistige Strömungen in Österreich 1867–1918* (Vienna, 1984), 23–24. Although the *Neue Freie Presse* was considered the flagship newspaper of liberalism during this period under the editorship of Moritz Benedikt, Fuchs notes that it generally took the most right-wing view possible on the liberal spectrum. During World War I, the newspaper supported the view that Austria must stand by Germany unconditionally, regardless of how the war was conducted, and should expect to reap rich territorial rewards. Fuchs concludes: “Was in den literarischen und wissenschaftlichen Spalten der *Neue Freie Presse* zu lesen war, kann das, was in den politischen Spalten stand, nicht vergessen machen. Im Gegenteil ist festzustellen, daß hier Kunst und Wissenschaft als Aushängeschild für tief antikulturelle Bestrebungen mißbraucht wurden.”

¹²See, for example, a letter from Siegfried Jacobson, editor of the *Weltbühne*, to Friedrich Austerlitz, editor of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, dated 4 June 1920: “Karl Kraus schwärmt von der *Arbeiter-Zeitung* [no italics in original text?] und behauptet, ich müsste sie unbedingt regelmäßig lesen.” Friedrich Austerlitz correspondence, *Parteiarchiv vor 1934*, Mappe Nr. 85, V&A Vienna.

¹³On the lack of a clear political affiliation in *Der Neue Tag*, see Uwe Schweikert, “‘Der rote Joseph.’ Politik und Feuilleton beim frühen Joseph Roth (1919–1926),” in *Text+Kritik*. Sonderband Joseph Roth (1974), 40–55.

¹⁴“Das Gebot der Stunde,” *Der Neue Tag*, 25 March 1919, 1. “Wird es noch möglich sein, die alte Ordnung zu verjüngen und dadurch die Grundlagen einer Zivilisation zu retten, die trotz vieler Uebel und Gebrechen auch Großes hervorgebracht? Wird das von Fieberschauern geschüttelte Europa diese schwerste aller Krisen überstehen oder von dem unheimlich drohenden Gewitter gänzlich zerstört werden? Was sich vorbereitet, was die Grundlagen der alten Welt bedroht, haben wir bisher nur durch die Brille der Politik betrachtet, an überlieferte Begriffe und

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Worte gewöhnt, sprachen wir von ‘Bolschewismus,’ ‘Proletarierdiktatur’ und vom Kampfe der ‘arbeitenden Klasse.’ Aber die Begriffe und Worte werden zu eng, die Bewegung wächst und wirft jede Überlieferung über den Haufen. Werden wir nicht morgen schon gezwungen sein, von der Empörung der Armen schlechtweg, von der Revolte aller Gequälten wider jahrelangen Zwang zu sprechen?

Es wäre vermessen, voreilig die Zukunft deuten zu wollen, noch vermessener aber mit keckem Sinn einen Sturm herbeizuwünschen, der in einem Jahre zerstören kann, was aufzubauen nur Jahrhunderten gelang. Aber eines freilich wird notwendig: Dem drohenden Ungemach ins Auge zu blicken und allen Hochmut und Egoismus zu begraben....

Wir müssen mit uns selbst fertig werden und hier zu retten trachten, was zu retten ist. Die Armen und Gequälten, die Empörten und Verzweifelnden pochen an die Tore dieser Ordnung; wohlan macht die Tore auf, werdet aus Klassengenossen gleiche Menschen, werdet vor allem aber Menschen! Die Not und Verzweiflung, die morgen Empörung heißen kann, geht alle an; es handelt sich um unser kosmisches Schicksal, um die Rettung der Gesittung vor dem Chaos. Der Ausbau des gleichen Rechtes, die Anerkennung der gleichen Pflichten ist das Gebot dieser Stunde.”

¹⁵As quoted by Westermann, Joseph Roth, Journalist, 27.

¹⁶For further details, see also Eckart Früh, “Joseph Roth im Spiegel österreichischer Arbeiterzeitungen,” in Joseph Roth. Interpretation—Kritik—Rezeption, ed. Michael Kessler and Fritz Hackert (Tübingen, 1990), 107–26.

¹⁷See, for example, Hanns Braun, “Die Zeitungsfunktionen des Feuilletons,” *Publizistik* 10 (1965): 292–301; Georg Jäger, “Das Zeitungsfeuilleton als literaturwissenschaftliche Quelle. Probleme und Perspektiven seiner Erschließung,” in *Bibliographische Probleme im Zeichen*

eines erweiterten Literaturbegriffs. Mitteilung IV der Kommission für Germanistische Forschung, ed. Wolfgang Martens, DFG Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (Weinheim, 1988), 53–71; see also Kai Kauffmann, ed., *Die lange Geschichte der kleinen Form: Beiträge zur Feuilletonforschung* (Berlin, 2000).

¹⁸See for example Wirtz, *Fiktionen des Faktischen*, chapter three.

¹⁹Hansjakob Ziemer, “Translating Everyday Experience Into Social Knowledge: Central European Feuilleton Culture Around 1900,” Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, accessed 15 April 2016, https://www.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/en/research/projects/deptii_ziemer_feuilletonculture.

²⁰See, for example, Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge, 2007).

²¹Roth’s first contribution to *Der Neue Tag* was “Die Insel der Unseligen,” a reportage about the psychiatric hospital Steinhof, published Sunday, 20 April 1919, p. 17. Many of the “Wiener Symptome” pieces can be found in Joseph Roth, *Werke*, 6 vols, ed. Klaus Westermann and Fritz Hackert (Cologne, 1989–91). See vol. 1: *Das journalistische Werk 1915–1923*, ed. Westermann, (Cologne, 1989), 30–98, although, as Irmgard Wirtz points out, this is not an exhaustive collection and the dates of publication given are not always accurate; see *Fiktionen des Faktischen*, 11–17 and 37–38 for Wirtz’s corrections and details of later, supplementary collections of Roth’s earliest journalism.

²²Joseph Roth, “Mai und Mais,” *Der Neue Tag*, 18 May 1919. “Fast hätte ich geglaubt, es wäre ein fataler Druckfehler im himmlischen Verordnungsblatt. Als der Mai trotz Abschaffung der Sommerzeit doch über die Welt kam und das Maisbrot auch noch auf den Tisch, kostete ich noch einmal das erhebende Gefühl des Durchhaltens in vollen Zügen und würzenden Bissen,

schwamm ich in goldgelben Reminiszenzen aus der Zeit in der man Gold für Maisbrot gab, das schwer verdaulich war wie ein Kriegsbericht und zwerchfellblähend wie ein A-Befund.” The “abolition of summertime” refers to daylight savings time—introduced in Austria 1916, renewed and then abolished in quick succession in April 1919.

²³Roth, “Mai und Mais.” “Keiner weiß, woher er kam, der Mais. Name und Art nur kennen wir zur Genüge.”

²⁴Roth, “Mai und Mais.” “Stammt er etwa noch aus den Vorratskammern des ukrainischen Brotfriedens? Drischt man ihn aus den Ähren jener Felder deren Ähren man zerstampft? Oder ist er eigens zurückbelassen aus jenen Jahren straffster Drosselung als sinniges Maisgeschenk zum Zeichen des Friedensschlusses?”

²⁵Roth, “Mai und Mais.” “Es ist jedenfalls ein kunstvoll dramatischer Aufbau in der Wiener Brotversorgung der letzten Wochen zu sehen. Nach dem Höhepunkt des Weißbrotes die Peripetie des Maisbrotes. Allen dramatischen Regeln zum Trotz unterbleibt hoffentlich die Katastrophe. Denn dieses goldgelbe Verhängnis ist an und für sich schon sinniger Abschluß einer gastrischen Tragödie, auf gefallenem Vorhang ein Fragezeichen, an Paris, ernste Mahnung an übermütig gewordene Zwölffingerdärme, Schlußakkord der 42-Zentimeter-Haubitzensymphonie, Punkt und Pause hinter der ganz ungenügend ausgefallenen Hausarbeit über die große Zeit.... Alles in allem: ein Wiener Symptom....”

²⁶Wolfdieter Bihl, *Der Erste Weltkrieg 1914–1918. Chronik—Daten—Fakten* (Vienna, 2010), 137. See also Heinz von Lichem, *Der Tiroler Hochgebirgskrieg 1915–1918 im Luftbild* (Innsbruck, 1985), 142.

²⁷Karl Kraus, “In dieser großen Zeit,” *Die Fackel* 404, no. 16, 5 December 1914, 1–19. This was first presented as a public lecture in November 1914.

²⁸Laurence Cole, *Military Culture and Popular Patriotism in Late Imperial Austria* (Oxford, 2014), 12–13.

²⁹Roth, “Mai und Mais.” “Ich sah eine Rippe um zwei Kronen vierzig in der Auslage.... Sie trägt eine Zürcher Marke und ist sicher durch den Schleichhandel in die Auslage geschmuggelt worden.... Durch **wie viele [two words in original text?]** Länder mit Grenzen, Verzollungen, Repetitionen, Vidierungen, Visitationen mußte diese Rippe wandern, ehe sie ins Schaufenster des Zuckerbäckers Thomas Helfering gelangte!”

³⁰Roth, “Mai und Mais.” “[E]in blondes Mäderl, barfuß, Hunger in den blauen Kinderaugen.”

³¹Roth, “Mai und Mais.” “Im Anblick der schwarzbraun glänzenden Schokoladenrippe wurde Fames vulgaris (gemeiner Hunger) zu beflügelter Sehnsucht, gierig körperliches Verlangen zu beschwingtem Himmelanstreben, animalische Angelegenheit zur rein seelischen. So etwa sieht der Himmel dieses Kindes aus: braun und mit Schokolade tapeziert.”

³²Roth, “Mai und Mais.” “[S]chwarzbraun glänzendes Zeichen ewiger Völkergemeinschaft!”

³³Joseph Roth, “Seifenblasen,” *Der Neue Tag*, 10 September 1919. “Ich habe Kinder gesehen, die Seifenblasen aufsteigen ließen./Nicht im Jahre neunzehnhundertunddreizehn, sondern gestern./Es waren richtige Seifenblasen. Ein Fläschchen voll Seifenschaum, ein Strohhalm, wie [sic = vier?] Kinder und eine stille Gasse im Sonnenglanze eines Sommervormittags. Die Seifenblasen waren große, wunderschöne, regenbogenfarbige Kugeln und schwammen leicht und sanft durch die blaue Luft. Kein Zweifel: Es waren richtige Seifenblasen. Nicht aus den Tümpeln der Kriegsleitartikel, der Vaterlandspartei, der Pressequartiere aufgestiegene Seifenblasen patriotischer Phraseologie, sondern wunderschöne, regenbogenfarbige Seifenblasen.”

³⁴Roth, “Seifenblasen.” *Wirtz, Fiktionen des Faktischen*, 34.

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³⁵For the analytical and socially critical aspects of Roth's style, see Chambers, "Signs of the Times," 110–11. Although Chambers is referring specifically to Roth's later Berlin journalism here, her arguments can be extended backward in time and are equally pertinent to his earlier Vienna texts.

³⁶Roth, "Seifenblasen." "Ich denke an die vielen Seifenblasen, die wir platzen sahen, während der ganzen langen Zeit, da Kartensystem und Kettenhandel sich der Seife bemächtigt hatten und die Fabrikation aus den Mündern der Kinder in die Mäuler der Siegfriedler und Politiker übergegangen war. Da war die Seifenblase des ukrainischen Brotfriedens, die Seifenblase von Brest-Litowsk, vom 'erjüngten Österreich' und schließlich die vierzehn großen Seifenblasen Wilsons, die in Versailles an Clemenceau anstießen und zerplatzten...."

Ich weiß, es werden immer noch Seifenblasen dieser Art aufsteigen. Seifenblasen der Weltrevolution, der Proletarierdiktaturen. Aber seitdem ich die echten, die wunderschönen regenbogenfarbigen Seifenblasen gesehen habe, blicke ich spöttisch und überlegen auf jene."

³⁷Peter Utz, *Tanz auf den Rändern*. Robert Walsers *Jetztzeitstil* (Frankfurt am Main, 1998), 359. See also Moritz Baßler, *Die Entdeckung der Textur*. *Unverständlichkeit in der Kurzprosa der emphatischen Moderne 1910–1916* (Berlin, 1994), especially chapter 6, "Seifenblasen. Textur und Feuilleton."

³⁸Sections appeared in Kraus's one-man periodical *Die Fackel* from December 1918 onward, the book edition followed in 1922.

³⁹Joseph Roth, "Papier," *Der Neue Tag*, 6 October 1919. "Letzter Zweck allen Geschehens ist: auf Papier mitgeteilt zu werden. So gewinnt die Mitteilung die Herrschaft über die Geschichte. Die Mitteilung macht Geschichte.

Der Krieg zeitigte eine besondere Erscheinungsform der Mitteilung: die außerordentliche Mitteilung, im Jargon der großen Zeit „Extra-Ausgabe“ genannt. Die „Extra-Ausgabe“ bewirkte eine Zeitlang Ereignisse, indem sie sie mitteilte. Dann aber wuchsen die Ereignisse der Extra-Ausgabe über den Kopf. Denn eine höhere Macht, das Pressequartier, schuf die Ereignisse, d.h. den Heeresbericht. Und diesen brachte die Extra-Ausgabe, keine außerordentliche mehr, sondern eine ordentliche Mitteilung.

Dennoch konnten sich die Leute der Macht des Papiers nicht entziehen. Der Ruf „Extra-Ausgabe!“ betäubte den Zweifel. Der Glaube an das Papier blieb aufrecht bis zum Zusammenbruch des Pressequartiers und dem ganz unvorhergesehenen Kopfsprung der Geschichte, der es plötzlich eingefallen war, ein Ereignis ohne vorherige Fühlungnahme mit dem Pressequartier zu zeitigen.”

⁴⁰On the necessity of using literary means to capture post-1918 reality, see also Frank Trommler, "Joseph Roth und die Neue Sachlichkeit," in *Joseph Roth und die Tradition*, ed. David Bronsen (Berlin, 1975), 276–304, in particular 281.

⁴¹Review of Döblin, *Reise in Polen* (1925), *Frankfurter-Zeitung*, January 1926, cited in Roth, *Werke II*, 533–35. "Seine Übertreibungen sind grotesk und deshalb von größerer Wahrheit als 'sachliche Schilderungen.' Er ist nicht 'objektiv,' das heißt nicht bestrebt, allen Seiten gerecht zu werden und dem Objekt ungerecht. Er ist subjektiv, deshalb kann man sich auf ihn verlassen. Er soll seine eigenen Vorurteile haben. Denn die eigenen Vorurteile eines Ironikers entstellen nicht wie die kühle Gerechtigkeit eines Pathetischen."

⁴²Kraus, "In dieser großen Zeit," 14. "Mit Feuilletons nimmt man es nicht so genau, da kann die Wahrheit durchrutschen."