CHAPTER 4

Jewish Cosmopolitanism and the European Idea, 1918–1933

After the Deluge

The brief period between the two world wars saw concerted efforts by liberal and leftist-leaning German and Austrian Jewish writers to promote the cosmopolitan ideal. For a little over a century, the cosmopolitan dream of a united Europe had been nascent among Christian and Jewish intellectuals in the German-speaking realm. Following the nationalist disaster of World War I and the rise of antisemitism throughout the 1920s, the cosmopolitanist project assumed particular urgency for Jewish intellectuals. Examining cosmopolitanist tropes in the writings by Stefan Zweig, Joseph Roth, and Lion Feuchtwanger, this chapter argues that Jewish sensitivities were by no means incidental to their cosmopolitanism but rather drove it in essential ways. These authors rewrote the older notion of the rootless Jewish nomad into the central paradigm of the modern cosmopolitan.

In asserting a cosmopolitanist sensibility, a concept that came to be synonymous with the European idea, these writers opposed not only the rabid nationalism that had led to the disaster of World War I and posed the threat of renewed world war but also the rise of political antisemitism throughout the interwar era. The 1922 assassination of German Jewish foreign minister Walter Rathenau demonstrated to these writers the urgent need for an effective defense against the growing nationalism and antisemitism. Cosmopolitanism placed the Jew at the heart of a new particularist universality from which a unified Europe beyond borders, national strife, and antisemitism would emerge. German-speaking Jewish writers, whose cosmopolitanist engagement came to the fore during the interwar period, felt compelled to straddle these conflicting images of cosmopolitanism, nomadism, and the Jews. Their construction of a nomadic cosmopolitanism, which fused the stereotypical image of the rootless
Jew with the seemingly more universal notion of the cosmopolitan, attempted to position the Jew at the core of a universal narrative of humankind. Given the anti-Jewish implications of both cosmopolitanism’s universalism as well as the discourse of the nomad, this strategy remained necessarily ambivalent.

Of course, cosmopolitanism was but one of a wide variety of interwar intellectual trends that were broadly catalyzed by the war experience. Jews could be found on all sides of the overlapping and conflicting debates regarding cosmopolitanism, the nation, and the socialist revolution. Some, among them Rosa Luxemburg and Kurt Eisner, had joined or even led Germany’s failed 1918–19 socialist revolutions. At the other end of the political spectrum stood ultranationalists such as Max Naumann, an army officer and holder of the Iron Cross as well as chair of the League of Nationalist German Jews. Naumann violently opposed Eastern Jews, whom he considered legitimate targets of antisemitism, and saw cosmopolitanism as the bane of Germans of Jewish descent. However, both radical socialists and nationalists remained a minority among Weimar Jews, who in overwhelming numbers supported the republic and its promise of full integration.

Likewise, German-speaking Jewish writers were not alone in promoting the cosmopolitan ideal but were just one voice in a literary chorus that included non-Jewish writers, primarily from France and Germany, such as René Schickele, Romain Rolland, and Thomas Mann. The breadth of cosmopolitanist thinking of the period ranged from a reiteration of Immanuel Kant’s rooted cosmopolitanism to a nomadic or solely intellectual cosmopolitanism and even included calls for a confederation of European states. Mann, for example, who went on to win the Nobel Prize, advocated a national cosmopolitanism in his 1918 Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen (Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man) although he was aware of the “in-built ambivalences” of such a position. As Mann elaborated in his 1925 essay, “Kosmopolitismus” (Cosmopolitanism), he “experienced cosmopolitanism or Europeanism essentially in German.”

Mann’s national cosmopolitanism was hotly contested by Austrian Jewish writer Stefan Zweig, who like Mann initially proposed cosmopolitanism as an intellectual affinity rather than a political project. Zweig, however, saw in Mann but a late convert to the European idea. Zweig’s 1918 essay, “Opportunismus, der Weltfeind” (Opportunism, the World’s Enemy), thus distinguished between the genuine German-speaking cosmopolitan, “the German European, who saw his ideal in democracy” and his nemesis, the German national democrat by necessity, “the sudden German democrats of tomorrow.” For Zweig, the latter, who like Mann had initially welcomed the war, had been swayed by its disastrous outcome rather than by a deeper identification with the European
idea. In his 1926 essay “Internationalismus oder Kosmopolitismus” (Internationalism or Cosmopolitanism), Zweig takes an implicit swipe at Mann in mentioning those writers who are last to embrace the European idea, after even politicians and bankers have already done so. Their credo, however, is but a lower form of cosmopolitanism, “a merely social, conventional and mutual hospitality” in the vein of Kant’s universal hospitality, whereas Zweig imbued internationalism with an altogether more radical gist: “Internationalism is an assertion of the indestructible unity of nation, independent of the chaos and bigotry of politics,” and would survive even the challenges of war.10

And indeed, Mann’s cosmopolitanism questioned the radical internationalism of pacifists such as Schickele, whom Zweig admired and who was then seen as the German cosmopolitan par excellence.11 Likewise, the German writer Annette Kolb and her French colleague, Rolland, can be seen as proponents of a rooted European (not national) cosmopolitanism, which reflected Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points and the resultant notion of international self-determination.12 At the same time, these writers offered a radical rereading of the promise of Wilson’s platform rather than reiterating Wilson’s suspicion of rootless cosmopolitans. Wilson thus claimed in his Second Inaugural Address on 5 March 1917 that Americans “are a composite and cosmopolitan people. We are of the blood of all the nations that are at war.” But Wilson’s was not that vague cosmopolitanism, “where sympathy was neither here nor there.”13 Americans, too, are a newly rooted people composed of those who have fled oppression and injustice, and they included Jews, who “are good citizens” of the national state as opposed to the “Jews of Poland” and their Zionist demand at Versailles for a Jewish state.14 Rooted cosmopolitanism, in their case, is a poor second to assimilation. Many flavors of cosmopolitanism existed simultaneously in the postwar world.

For most writers of the period, the ideal of European unity was based on the assumption of shared intellectual traditions across national borders and languages, although some, including Heinrich Mann, already promoted Europe as a political idea—for example, in the shape of a confederation of European states. For all of these authors, however, the cosmopolitan idea of a united Europe represented a powerful bulwark against the ravages of nationalistic war. Although the interwar writings of Zweig, Roth, and Feuchtwanger are regularly considered to have spearheaded the German cosmopolitanist engagement, their close intertwining of Jewish sensitivities and cosmopolitanist thought has previously remained underexamined.15

The previously unknown movement of people across Europe and the globe the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had increasingly undone
the relationship between national identity and geographic affiliation, which nationalism had claimed was fixed, and the diasporic condition was thus becoming ever more common. Conversely, the mass atrocities of World War I increasingly discredited the nationalistic excesses from which they had risen and catalyzed new interest in the cosmopolitan idea. As a result, cosmopolitanism became increasingly detached from patriotism, and the notion of a nomadic cosmopolitanism, often linked to the city, increasingly took hold. The Jewish condition of the diaspora with its deterritorialized particularist affiliation thus seemed to be turning into a universal condition, and cosmopolitanist ideas particularly appealed to German-speaking Jews, who sought to claim both their Jewish and German affiliations. Franz Rosenzweig’s 1926 anthology, Zweistromland (Land of Two Rivers), which cast the German-speaking diaspora between the Danube and Rhine as the new Babylon, thus spoke for many who believed that their Jewish and German affiliations could flow together seamlessly.16

Zweig, Roth, and Feuchtwanger stood at the forefront of Jewish cosmopolitanist engagement during the interwar period, but the cosmopolitanist aspect of their writing has not yet received in-depth attention. As this chapter shows, all three writers proposed the deterritorialized state of the diaspora Jew as the paradigm of the future European citizen beyond national boundaries. With its idea of one God above the nations, they claimed, Judaism promoted universalism at its core. The diaspora, then, formed the necessary condition for Judaism’s wider dissemination of its humanistic mission. These authors’ cosmopolitanist position thus remained distinct from the diametrically opposed camps of the acculturists in the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (the Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith, founded in 1893) and the Zionists, with their nationalistic claims.

The nomadic cosmopolitanism proposed by Zweig, Roth, and to a lesser degree Feuchtwanger intervenes in Kant’s rooted cosmopolitanism with its patriotic implications on the one hand and the stereotype of rootless Jewishness on the other. Whereas Zweig’s cosmopolitanism showed close affinities with the assimilationist position, Roth’s construction of the Jews as a diasporic ethnicity was borrowed from the cultural Zionism of Ahad Ha’am and Martin Buber. In contrast, Feuchtwanger increasingly conceded the importance of a Jewish polity in Palestine, thus balancing Zionist sympathies with his cosmopolitanist engagement. Despite these important differences, all three writers propose a cosmopolitan prototype in the Jew’s mobile and liminal subjectivity, which effects a transient belonging through contingent and shifting regional affiliations.
Sigrid Thielking has already observed the Weimar era’s emergent linkages between nomadism and cosmopolitanism, which became associated with a rising, highly mobile urban elite. In contrast, Roth, Zweig, and Feuchtwanger link the deterritorialized figure of the Jew, whom they position in the palimpsest of the cosmopolitan, to peripheral and liminal subjectivities from the pre-modern fringes of the Austro-Hungarian Empire rather than its centers.

Whereas mobility represented in terms of the movement through space and time (by carriage or by train) dominated the metaphors of cosmopolitanism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a more sedentary but perhaps also more subversive image arises in post–World War I writings. The hotel and the coffeehouse, both reflecting the transience of the modern individual and the Jew as its emblem, become the salient signifiers of this body of writing. These reference the cosmopolitan nodal points for travelers through space and time, perhaps best exemplified by Vicki Baum’s best-selling 1929 novel (and 1932 Academy Award–winning film) Menschen im Hotel (Grand Hotel). Zweig and Roth in particular frequented these institutions of Austro-Hungarian public life.

In turn, critics of modernity during the 1920s, such as Oswald Spengler in his Decline of the West (1922), saw in these spaces the sign of the weakened racial instincts of the urban intellectual and viewed cosmopolitanism as the downfall of the Western world. Spengler’s global best seller famously referred to cosmopolitanism as a pure fiction advocated by writers of such fiction. Charges Spengler, “The world cities are pure intellect, rootless”; they harbor “born world-citizens, world-pacifists, and world reconcilers” who are but a minority of timeless a-historic, literary men, men not of destiny, but of reasons and causes, men who are inwardly detached from the pulse of blood and being. . . . Cosmopolitanism is a mere waking-conscious association of intelligentsias. (DW, 2:184–85)

These are, of course, only thinly disguised references to the stereotype of the rootless Jews and the city as their site. Here Spengler implicitly draws on the work of Otto Weininger, a Viennese Jew whose 1903 Sex and Character had claimed the Jew’s purely materialistic nature and lacking historical awareness. Furthermore, Spengler pointed to the largely literary medium of cosmopolitanist thought, by which he simultaneously declared its illusory nature: “Cosmopolitanism is literature and remains literature, very strong in reasons, very weak in defending them otherwise than with more reasons, in defending them with the blood” (DW, 2:185). Spengler even dismissed altogether the cosmopolitanist idea of Europe, which he believed had erroneously integrated Russia
into the West, and instead called for the creation of “an ideal frontier corresponding to the physical frontier between “Europe” and “Asia” instead” (DW, 1:16 n. 1). This notion of the cosmopolitan is underlined when Spengler sees in the cosmopolitan intellectual the evolution of a new urban nomad:

In place of a type-true people, born of and grown on the soil, there is a new sort of nomad, cohering unstably in fluid masses, the parasitical city dweller, traditionless, utterly matter-of-fact, religionless, clever, unfruitful, deeply contemptuous of the countryman and especially that highest form of countryman, the country gentleman. (DW, 1:32)

The “country gentleman” is rooted in the soil, and the difference between the Germans and the Jews rests in this dichotomy. Accordingly, the medieval German was still a “Gothic” peasant bound to the land when the Jews were “megapolitan” with their “superior, almost cynical, intelligence and [their] finished expertise in ‘money-thinking’” (DW, 1:368). Modernity is merely the continuation of this

new nomadism of the Cosmopolis, for which slaves and barbarians in the Classical world, Sudras in the Indian, and in general anything and everything that is merely human, provide an undifferentiated floating something that falls apart the moment it is born, that recognizes no past and no future. (DW, 1:368)

Indeed, Spengler’s vision in the midst of World War I that Germany was in the grasp of the inorganic, cosmopolitan masses, which had to give way to a new “agricultural-intuitive” awakening, ruled by an “organic structure of political existence” (DW, 1:73–75) is simply nineteenth-century views on the rootedness of the Germans turned into historical theory. For Spengler, this reawakening is only true of the German Volk and such races that “never wander” (DW, 2:254). They are fixed in space and time, whereas the Jews represent money and can only be overcome by “blood” (DW, 2:287), which defined the inherent rootedness of the Volk, as Alex Bein has argued.

At least one writer born in imperial Austria was sure he had the answer to the question of Jewish cosmopolitanism. Adolf Hitler, born in 1889 to a petit bourgeois family in Braunau, an Austrian border town close to Bavaria, reflected while in Landsberg Prison in 1923–24 about how he understood Jewish cosmopolitanism in imperial Austria. During his incarceration, Hitler authored Mein Kampf, which in a not-too-subtle manner recounts his coming to terms
with his own cosmopolitanism when he is forced to recognize the Jew as the true cosmopolitan. In Linz, where he was raised, Jews seemed to him to have been invisible. Even Hitler’s father, a civil servant, abjured crude antisemitism: “I think the old gentleman would just have considered those who used [the word Jew] in this way as being uneducated reactionaries. In the course of his career he had come to be more or less a cosmopolitan, with strong views on nationalism” (MK, 51). Rejecting his father’s and his own Austrian cosmopolitanism meant stressing Jewish difference, but not in terms of ideas of the Jew as nomad. For the Jews were sui generis: they were so without roots that they actually defined corrosive cosmopolitanism.

*Mein Kampf* thus thoroughly debunked the notion of the Jewish nomad as a reading of Jewish cosmopolitanism because, as Hitler claimed, the Jew had “never possessed a state with definite territorial limits and therefore never called a culture his own” (MK, 300–311). In contrast, “the nomad does possess a definitely limited living space; only he does not cultivate it like a sedentary peasant, but lives from the yield of his herds with which he wanders about in his territory” (MK, 324–27). For Hitler, Bolshevik internationalism was at its core a reflex of perceived rootlessness of the Jew and his inherent detachment from the land.

In multiethnic, cosmopolitan Vienna, Hitler “understood the language of the Jew. I realized that the Jew uses language for the purpose of dissimulating his thought or at least veiling it, so that his real aim cannot be discovered by what he says but rather by reading between the lines. This knowledge was the occasion of the greatest inner revolution that I had yet experienced. From being a soft-hearted cosmopolitan I became an out-and-out antisemite” (MK, 63). Moreover, he argues, cosmopolitanism is inherently non-German: “Our national stock has been so much adulterated by the mixture of alien elements that, in its fight for power, Jewry can make use of the more or less ‘cosmopolitan’ circles which exist among us, inspired by pacifist and international ideologies” (MK, 524). In other words, the Jews have polluted German self-identity with their false cosmopolitanism. This is merely a mask by which they undermine national values.

In the unpublished sequel to *Mein Kampf*, Hitler writes of the decay of modern Europe under the influence of the Jews. He quotes the German historian Theodor Mommsen on the destruction of the Roman Empire, evoking the association of imperial Germany with Rome: “In the old world as well, Jewry was an effective ferment of cosmopolitanism and national decomposition and in this respect a preferentially entitled member of that Caesarean state whose polity was actually nothing but cosmopolitanism, whose national character
was basically nothing but humanity.”

Remembering the odd identification of imperial Austria with Rome (in contrast to the German Empire’s image of itself as a new Greece), Hitler sees that the roots of Jewish cosmopolitanism have entangled themselves with the destruction of empire from the beginnings of imperial history.

**Stefan Zweig: The Model European**

The discourse of cosmopolitanism, in turn, enabled leftist-liberal Jewish writers such as Zweig, Roth, and Feuchtwanger to undermine the imagined physical, ideological, and racial frontiers and to rewrite the antisemitic image of the Asiatic Jew into the productive prototype of a cosmopolitan humanity. The hotel and the coffeehouse were the most recognizable public institutions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which in Zweig’s and Roth’s interwar writings now signifies the lost Europe before World War I. This was, as Zweig nostalgically claimed in his *World of Yesterday*, a world beyond fortified national borders in which passports were unknown and everyone could travel freely.

Mark H. Gelber and Anna-Dorothea Ludewig, as well as Karl Müller have thus pointed out the limitations of Zweig’s cosmopolitanism, arguing that it is essentially centered on the “old Austria” and Western Europe more broadly and is based on the idea of shared European intellectual and spiritual traditions rather than political thought. Similarly, Robert Wistrich has argued that *The World of Yesterday* idealizes the Austro-Hungarian Empire for its presumed political and social stability while largely eliding its internal contradictions.

Yet the political implications of Zweig’s writings must not be underestimated. During a time when aggressive nationalism and antisemitism were once again on the rise, Zweig and other cosmopolitanist writers’ emphasis on common humanistic values across the boundaries of nation and race held political implications in and of themselves. After all, Zweig’s idealized vision of the pre-1914 cosmopolitan Europe have largely materialized in post-1989 Western societies with their multi- and transcultural populations and open borders within the European Union, although these are currently under siege by nationalist movements across the European Union as well as Britain’s planned exit from the EU. Zweig and others of his generation saw literature as the ideal medium to promote this dream. They did so by drawing on Goethe, who represented the humanistic values on which German-speaking Jews in particular had pinned their hopes for integration, despite his occasional, less flattering comments on the Jews.

Goethe’s deterritorialized concept of world literature
was the beacon of these writers and the Jew its emblem. These interwar cosmopolitanist writers thus provided the intellectual and cultural justification for the project of European unity, which has now become political reality.

Zweig’s cosmopolitanism was essentially based on the premise of shared European intellectual traditions, and his writing can be considered largely assimilationist in gist. After all, Zweig grew up in a highly assimilated middle-class family in Vienna and saw himself as partaking in the dominant German-speaking culture of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In contrast to Zweig’s fin de siècle cycle of Jewish novellas, few of his post–World War I works feature explicitly Jewish characters. Zweig’s universalism obviously overrode his Jewish affinities, which nonetheless formed the implicit core of his sympathies for the disenfranchised in society. Mark Gelber has thus argued for an evident “Jewish sensitivity” in Zweig’s writing that seems to have been based on racialized presuppositions. In his 1931 interview with David Ewen, Zweig stated that he had been aware of his Jewish “blood” for as long as he could remember. Blood, of course, has a long symbolic history in German literature as a means of representing racial identity. Such invocations of race by an avowed cosmopolitan may sound paradoxical, but they demonstrate the extent to which racialized concepts of identity had become widely accepted even among Jews of the period.

Zweig’s alignment of the cosmopolitan with the European idea is evident throughout his interwar writings, where Jewish paradigms remain in the palimpsest that is fundamental to his understanding of the modern cosmopolitan. These premises are evident in Zweig’s essay, “Der Turm zu Babel” (The Tower of Babel, 1916), in which Zweig draws on the Hebrew Bible to configure the modern cosmopolitan vision. The tower in the story is the product of human unity, which God seeks to destroy by creating different languages and thus sowing misunderstanding and strife. For thousands of years, humans lived in disunity, each clinging to his own land, until a few wise men began to sow the seeds of shared knowledge and science. And so the tower is resurrected, taller than ever before, and will have to be completed “in our Europe, where it was begun, and not incidentally in foreign parts of the world, in America, in Asia.”

Zweig’s 1932 essay “Der europäische Gedanke in seiner Entwicklung” (The Development of the European Idea) also placed the Jewish paradigm at the core of the cosmopolitanist sensibility. Once again, Zweig returns to the Hebrew Bible’s story of the Babylonian tower to symbolize the human drive for unity. This story, however, is not merely a story told by the Jews and for the Jews: it is an archetypal story, which belongs to all humanity. “What else are myths but the wishful dreams of entire peoples?,” Zweig asks rhetorically,
thereby suggesting that none other than the Jews originated the universal dream of humanity.\textsuperscript{33}

Zweig’s 1927 collection of stories, \textit{Sternstunden der Menschheit} (Sidereal Hours of Humanity), translated as \textit{The Tide of Fortune}, must be read as a literary monument to this dream of universality.\textsuperscript{34} Each of the five stories in the initial collection draws its subject from the history and culture of Western countries—France, Germany, the United States, Russia, and Britain. As in Zweig’s earlier Jewish-themed novellas, a hitherto insignificant man catalyzes in each of these stories an event of supposedly global significance, “world history.”\textsuperscript{35} In their totality, the stories thus imply a vision of Europe based on shared historical, political, economic, cultural, and scientific traditions and structures. The first story, “Die Weltminute von Waterloo” (The World Minute of Waterloo, translated as “The Decisive Hour at Waterloo”), treats Napoleon’s final defeat at Waterloo in 1815 as the moment of birth of a new, unified Europe. The parallels to Zweig’s hopes that the World War I disaster would spawn European unity are evident. The twenty years of Napoleonic Wars end and a new war is averted when the English, Prussian, Austrian, and Russian ministers cease to bicker and unite their armies in battle. But the driving force behind this new Europe is Jewish banker Nathan Mayer Rothschild, who rushes to London to exploit the yet-hidden news of Napoleon’s defeat at the stock market. Through this streak of genius, Rothschild “founded another empire, established a new dynasty” (ToF, 162) in linking the financial fates of the European nations.

Another story, “Marienbader Elegie” (The Marienbad Elegy), shows the emergence of universal humanism in nineteenth-century European literature through the towering figure of Goethe. Inspired by his last love, the German Prince of Poetry not only writes his greatest poem, an expression of the universal sentiment of love in the equally universal medium of poetry, but also goes on to complete his \textit{Wilhelm Meister} and \textit{Faust}, which have themselves become considered world literature. The volume’s cosmopolitan vision culminates in its final story, “Der Kampf in den Südpol” (Quest of the South Pole), which charts the final voyage of British explorer Robert Falcon Scott in 1912. In a period of heightened nationalistic fervor, Norwegian Roald Amundsen and Scott vied to plant their national banners on the South Pole, which remains the last spot on earth to have resisted scientific and nationalistic conquest. Yet Scott, who loses this battle and dies on the ice, who in dying realizes his kinship with the both English nation and all of humanity. Scott’s tragedy, in turn, lends his story a universal significance. While Scott’s last letters, written in his dying hours, thus “speak to the whole of mankind” (ToF, 236), they also turn his journey into “a strenuous appeal to humanity” (ToF, 240).
Sternstunden der Menschheit evinces the largely subdued treatment of Jewish themes and protagonists in Zweig’s interwar writings, which may relate to his intensified sense of urgency regarding the cosmopolitan mission. As the figure of Rothschild indicates, a “Jewish sensitivity” nonetheless remained at the core of Zweig’s cosmopolitan thinking.

Zweig’s Jewish figures often carry stereotypical connotations that seem to jar with his cosmopolitanism. The seeming chasm between racialized imagery and cosmopolitanist thought emerges perhaps most clearly in “Buchmendel” (The Old-Book Peddler, 1929), which represents Zweig’s most explicit treatment of Jewish themes during the interwar period. In the story, Zweig proposes the Jew, with his particularist nature and universalist strivings, as the prototype of the deterritorialized cosmopolitan on the one hand and as the litmus test for universal human rights on the other. “The Old-Book Peddler” recounts the story of Mendel, a Galician Jew whom the narrator first met at the smoky Café Gluck in pre–World War I Vienna. A book peddler, Mendel had spends days at the café, sourcing for his customers rare titles from booksellers across the European continent.

Dressed in shabby clothes and shortsighted to the point of near-blindness, Mendel typifies the antisemitic perception of the deformed Jewish body and soul, which became epitomized in the Eastern Jew. Yet this unassuming man displays almost total recall of every book he has ever seen. His mental efforts represent Zweig’s clearest borrowing from the repertoire of modern antisemitism, for Mendel’s “brilliant book-brain” (OBP, 32) emerges as a dubious celebration of Jewish intellect. First made by the German composer Richard Wagner in his infamous 1850 essay, Judaism in Music, this claim became a common trope in the repertoire of antisemitism. Mendel reads these books not for their intellectual and aesthetic content but merely for information:

Only their authors and titles, their prices, their outward forms, their title-pages drew his attention. In the final analysis, though unproductive and uncreative, and only a register of a hundred thousand titles and names stamped into the soft cortex of a mammalian brain, instead of being written in a book catalogue. (OBP, 35)

Zweig twins these tainted images of the unoriginal and demonic Jewish intellect with the stereotype of the hypersexual yet castrated Jew who diverts spiritual and sexual energy into a warped type of promiscuity. Thirty-three years earlier (a number invoking the age of the Christian messiah, who according to the Gospel died at the age of thirty-three), Mendel had studied for the
rabbinate; however, he soon abandoned the monotheistic God and succumbed to the “sparkling and thousand-fold polytheism of books” (OBP, 41). Polytheism, which was linked to Temple prostitution during antiquity, here serves as a reference to the Jew’s distorted mental and sexual preoccupations, which Austrian Jewish writer Otto Weininger had claimed in his best-selling 1903 work, *Sex and Character*. Touching books gives Mendel the same pleasure that other men would experience while holding a woman: “These moments were his Platonic love nights” (OBP, 40).

These essentializing portrayals only seemingly conflict with the universalizing premises of cosmopolitanism, where the particular and the universal remain in dialectic tension. For assimilated Jews such as Zweig, who had little knowledge of or even interest in Jewish culture and tradition, the body forms a last resort as the assumed locus of innate difference. Zweig’s essentialisms problematically indicate the Jew’s difference in the diaspora even under the conditions of assimilation. His book *Brazil*, completed shortly before his 1942 suicide, similarly relied on racialized essentialisms to propose its vision of Brazil as the cosmopolitan model of the future. Although it is problematic, this strategy resists the clear-cut assimilation of the Jew into the universal, as earlier critics have claimed, and instead draws on the Jew to stress the particularist universality of the cosmopolitan ideal. Characteristically, however, Zweig’s Mendel represents merely a prototype of the cosmopolitan that ultimately remains unactualized in both human awareness and society. The suspension of the cosmopolitan ideal in all but Zweig’s final work, *The World of Yesterday*, which idealized the Austro-Hungarian Empire as the social manifestation of cosmopolitanism, conveys the fragile liberal consensus of the interwar period as well as Zweig’s sense of his politically impotent humanism.

Mendel’s essentialized portrayal simultaneously embodies the Eastern Jew’s stereotypical qualities and the inherent universalism of Judaism, which Zweig had claimed in his fin de siècle Jewish novellas. A “unique memory”—indeed, “a veritable encyclopedia, a universal catalogue on two legs” (OBP, 31)—Mendel reflects Zweig’s prewar suggestion that Judaism had anticipated the cosmopolitan spirit from antiquity on. Furthermore, Mendel’s pursuits are solely for the sake of his books, and he thus refuses to profit from his custom- ers or even accept offers of paid work from globally renowned libraries such as Princeton. Mendel thus conveys Zweig’s assertion elsewhere of the Jew’s “secret longing to resolve the merely Jewish—through flight into the intellectual—into humanity at large” (WY, 21). As Zweig further argues in *The World of Yesterday*, the assumption that Jews sought solely to become rich was simply wrong; rather, riches were a means for the Jew, rather than his goal:
The real determination of the Jew is to rise to a higher cultural plane in the intellectual world. Even in the case of the Eastern Orthodox Jewry, where the weaknesses as well as the merits of the whole race are more intensely manifested, this supremacy of the will to the spiritual over the mere material finds plastic expression. (WY, 20)

The Viennese café, then, represents for Zweig the ideal site for the universalist strivings of the Jew, who represents the transience of modern subjectivities and their emergent cosmopolitan awareness. Like Mendel, Viennese intellectuals and writers of the period practically lived in the coffeehouse, where they worked, ate and drank, and conducted private affairs. The coffeehouse, which represented the essence of urban Viennese lifestyle, was a specifically Austrian institution. It was practically unrivaled elsewhere in Europe, with the notable exception of one Viennese-style café in Berlin and another in Zurich. The idea’s somewhat clichéd implications today result precisely from the numerous literary references to the coffeehouse in writings by Zweig, Roth, and Franz Werfel, to mention but a few, who made it the salient signifier of Austro-Hungarian society.

*The World of Yesterday* describes the Viennese coffeehouse as the site of education in all current cultural and political affairs, where every Austrian regardless of class or ethnic affiliation could access an unlimited range of newspapers and journals and discuss all daily matters with his friends. A “sort of democratic club to which admission costs the small price of a cup of coffee,” it was “the best place to keep up with everything new” (WY, 41). In Zweig’s description, the coffeehouse practically spawned Austrian cosmopolitanism, for “perhaps nothing contributed to the intellectual mobility and the international orientation of the Austrian that he could keep abreast of all world events in the café, and at the same time discuss them in the circle of his friends” (WY, 41). The Viennese coffeehouse becomes the democratic institution per se and the Jews progenitors of the city’s cosmopolitan spirit.

Through the figure of Mendel, Zweig portrays the Jew’s particularist identity and universalist strivings as the prototype of the cosmopolitan. The Jew epitomizes the nascent cosmopolitan condition of the interwar period, though contemporary political developments prevent that condition from materializing in the political realm. A cosmopolitan Europe is but an unrealized dream whose violent destruction the story anticipates in Mendel’s inadvertent demise. As the narrator learns, Mendel was arrested just after the outbreak of World War I for having sent a postcard inquiry to a bookseller in Paris. Mendel, who lives solely in the deterritorialized world of books, had been unaware of
the new political situation, which placed Paris in enemy land. Zweig’s con-
struction of the full absurdity of nationalistic excesses is apparent in the Aust-
rian censor’s dismayed and puzzled response to the postcard:

To think that anyone should carelessly send a letter from Austria to France,
should so light-heartedly and so simply mail a postal card to an enemy
country, as if these boundaries had not been bristling with barbed wire
since 1914, and as if on every single day France, Germany, Austria, and
Russia were not lessening one another’s male population by a few thou-
sand. (OBP, 52)

Unsure whether the postcard constitutes a strange joke or an act of politi-
cal subversion, the censor has the case reported, and Mendel is arrested. Now,
in the new world of institutionalized national borders and affiliations, the root-
less Jew’s lack of national sentiment becomes his fatal flaw. Mendel’s birth-
place in the Russian Empire, now also behind enemy lines, and his failure ei-
ther to obtain Austrian citizenship or to register as an enemy alien after the
outbreak of war, both born of sheer ignorance, now render him a dangerous
suspect. The guileless Mendel is interned in a concentration camp, where lack
of books and literate companions lead to his spiritual and physical demise.
Mendel’s tragic ending symbolizes the deep war trauma and its irrevocable
destruction of the dual monarchy’s humanistic legacy, which Zweig openly
idealized in his final work, The World of Yesterday.

Mendel thus emerges as the litmus test of the universal human rights first
formulated in Kant’s notion of universal hospitality even among the most ata-
vistic peoples. The European nations of France, Germany and England had
committed “a crime against civilization” (OBP, 58–59) by interning civilians
behind barbed wire, thereby denying those enemy aliens “the sacredness of the
right of asylum, respected even among the Tungusians and the Araucanian”
(OBP, 58).43 Indeed, Zweig’s recognition of this humanitarian crisis and its
spawning of a European cause dates back to his 1917 essay, “Das Herz Euro-
pas” (The Heart of Europe), which considered the Geneva Red Cross the last
safeguard of Europe’s “crucified body” and now its “heart.”44

The deep trauma of the war and the irrevocable wounds it has inflicted on
the fabric of the old Austria’s humanistic society emerge in Mendel’s tragic
death, which occurs not during the war but after its end. Having been liberated
from the camp, a broken Mendel returns to Café Gluck, but his customers have
forgotten him, and the café owner thinks him a useless parasite. After accusa-
tions of theft, Mendel is evicted. Confused and emaciated, he arrives one more
time on its doorstep and collapses dead. The story thus anticipates the core themes of Zweig’s final work, *The World of Yesterday*, with its idealized portrayals of the cosmopolitan Austro-Hungarian Empire as a model Europe and Zweig’s profound sense of homelessness after its ending.

**Joseph Roth’s Hotel Patriotism**

Zweig’s story shares many similarities with the portrayals of Eastern Jews in the works of his close friend, Joseph Roth. Born in 1894 in Brody, a town in Eastern Galicia (now Ukraine), on the outer edges of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Roth spent most of his highly successful career in Vienna and later Berlin. Beginning in 1923, his work as a reporter for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* led him to travel widely across Europe, visiting Albania, France, Italy, Poland, and the Soviet Union, that new multiethnic state in which Jews had not only been recognized as a nationality in their own right but had also been given their own republic, Birobidzhan.

Much like Zweig, Roth promoted a diasporic sensitivity, although he was more clearly a cultural Zionist, in the sense that he attributed to diaspora Jewry a distinct culture and ethnic identity. Roth’s origins in the Austro-Hungarian Empire’s Slavic provinces rather than the German-speaking capital of Vienna fueled his increasingly prominent construction of the Jews as a distinct ethnic group—understood in Austro-Hungarian terms as a nationality—with strong ties to the Slavic peoples in the empire. Ilse Lazaroms has highlighted Roth’s depiction of the exilic condition of the Jews, which stands at the center of many of his novels. Roth uses these portrayals of Jewish exile to construct the Jew as the prototype of the cosmopolitan condition, which once again remains suspended in his novels.

Perhaps even more than Zweig, Roth felt himself irrevocably uprooted and homeless after the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918. Like Zweig, Roth thus increasingly turned toward a nostalgic vision of the empire in which he saw the cosmopolitan ideal approximated if not fully realized. As Lazaroms suggests, throughout the 1920s, Roth sought to create an intellectual community across European borders, a community founded on the conditions of exile and faith in European humanism. Furthermore, in arguing for Roth’s and Zweig’s sense of a Jewish identity in crisis, Armin A. Wallas contends that both writers “replaced their Jewish identity through supranational constructs such as cosmopolitanism or European and universal culture respectively.”

The close linkages between the cosmopolitanist and supranationalist proj-
ects are evident, and indeed, both discourses have historically advocated the ethnic plurality of the Habsburg Empire. Although intricately related, these concepts, however, must not be understood interchangeably. Recent theorization has defined supranationalism as a political structure promoting a type of overarching nationalism, a political project “existing above and beyond the nation,” with prime examples found in the dual monarchy and the Soviet Union.

Even Zweig’s and Roth’s occasional references to the Jews as an “Übernation” (supranation) indicate the meanings of overarching territorial and political structures that have dominated this concept from its beginnings in the Austro-Hungarian context.

Broadly speaking, supranationalism can thus be imbued with the potential to produce the cosmopolitan sensibility, although in the case of the Stalinist Soviet Union such was arguably not the case. In turn, some strands of cosmopolitanism have historically seen supranationalism as the political and territorial manifestation of their aims, whereas national cosmopolitanists such as Thomas Mann did not. In the case of the dual monarchy, Malachi Haim Hacohen thus aptly distinguishes between the “supranational empire” and the “cosmopolitan attitude” of its “Westernized” Jews.

Overall, supranationalism does not carry the rich historic connotations of cosmopolitanism, with its arguably romanticized vision of a cultural, ethnic, and national diversity steeped in humanistic values. For better or worse, these connotations have revived cosmopolitanism as a salient concept across academic disciplines and wider public debates since the 1990s.

Contrary to Wallas’s assertion, Zweig’s and Roth’s cosmopolitanist or supranationalist engagement did not simply replace or override their Jewish affinities, which remained in the palimpsest of their cosmopolitanist writings. Indeed, Zweig’s and Roth’s cosmopolitanism emerged precisely in their attempts to integrate the particularist sensibility of the Jew with their universalizing constructs of the dual monarchy as a utopian “miniature Europe.” This reading thus not only furthers an understanding of the diasporic and cosmopolitanist sensibilities of both writers but also illuminates their literary portrayals of the dual monarchy and the Jews, which indicate their vision of a deterritorialized cosmopolitanism beyond the nation.

Throughout his major novels, Roth configures the seminomadic inhabitants of the borderlands as the prototype of the cosmopolitan. The borderlands, by implication, represent the cosmopolitan model because their heterogeneous populations disrupt the assumed clear-cut affiliations between the nation-state, ethnicity, and soil. In Roth’s later novels, this vision is underlined by suggestions that the dual monarchy provided the unifying umbrella and humanistic safeguard for these heterogeneous populations. Roth’s Jewish protagonists in
particular represent the burgeoning cosmopolitanism that we have already seen in Zweig’s interwar references to the Jews. Like Zweig, Roth’s ultimate suspension of the cosmopolitan awareness acknowledges its utopian status as a consequence of the competing forces of violent nationalism on the one hand and social revolution on the other.

The hotel and the café are the central images in Roth’s cosmopolitan vision of a Europe beyond national borders, and Roth has been deemed “a hotel patriot,” in contrast to the nationalistic patriotism of his time. The novel *Hotel Savoy* (1924), which remains Roth best-known work, consolidated both this image and Roth’s literary fame. Set in an industrial town at the eastern “gates of Europe” (HS, 9), the Savoy’s location invokes the textile-manufacturing city of Lodz, which has often been referred to as the Polish Manchester. The historically Polish settlement of Lodz lay on the border with the German-speaking lands and saw the arrival of a substantial German-speaking middle class during the nineteenth century.

Scholars often note Roth’s cosmopolitanist engagement but have not fully explored the subject. As Lazaroms has shown, Roth’s “itinerant existence,” which was expressed through his constant moves between countries and hotels, has led to the perception of his cosmopolitan flair. Roth was, of course, not alone in his ambiguous experience of hotel life. During the interwar years, the Paris hotel epitomized to many Eastern European Jews the comforts of a bourgeois lifestyle; in later years, however, those exiled from National Socialist Germany saw the hotel as symbolizing the ambiguities of refugee life, and some exiles therefore preferred to stay in hotels rather than find flats. The hotel also became the site of desperation. In May 1939 Roth’s friend, anarchist playwright and political revolutionary Ernst Toller, learned that his sister and brother had been sent to concentration camps and hanged himself in a room at the Mayflower Hotel in New York City. In *Hotel Savoy* in particular, Roth resists the obscene glorification of the nomadic existence enforced by war and exile for which Lazaroms chastises much of Roth’s reception. At the same time, Roth’s evident references to the cosmopolitan call for examination, especially in light of his awareness of the class privilege associated with the nomadic lifestyle. Indeed, the Hotel Savoy emerges as the ambiguous sign of the transience of all national, geographic, ethnic, and class-based ties, which give rise to a cosmopolitan awareness in the novel’s Jewish narrator, Dan. In leaving the cosmopolitan condition unactualized, Roth points to the nationalistic, racialized, and class-based strife that hinders the emergent cosmopolitan under the current political conditions.

Born in this industrial town to Russian Jewish parents, Dan represents the
liminal subjectivity of the borderland inhabitants that Roth privileges throughout his novels. After three years of wartime detainment in a Siberian POW camp, Dan spent a year wandering westward toward his hometown, where he now permanently resides at the Savoy. Dan’s budding cosmopolitan awareness is displayed in his sense of his essence in heterogeneity, which at the same time reflects Roth’s deterritorialized vision of particularist universality:

One can absorb such a lot and yet remain unchanged in body, in walk, in behaviour. One can drink from a million glasses and never quench one’s thirst. A rainbow may quiver with all its colours but can never change the spectrum. (HS, 10)

However, this quasi-natural state of the individual cannot flourish as a consequence of the profound disruptions caused by the war. Dan had previously dreamed of becoming a writer, but his war experience has left him isolated and deprived of the belief that he possessed the universal voice that writing requires: “I went to the war and now I feel there is no point in writing. I am a solitary person and cannot write for the public” (HS, 24).

The Hotel Savoy is the salient signifier of the nomadic and atavistic state of post–World War I society, in which the individual has become totally objectified and social injustice reigns supreme. The hotel, “where one would live and another die, . . . and girls had to strip naked before factory owners and house agents” (HS, 52), exemplifies the extreme inhumanity of postwar capitalism, which exploits some while offering a dazzling new social mobility for others: “One might arrive at the Hotel Savoy with a single shirt and leave it as the owner of twenty trunks” (HS, 56). The view of the hotel as the sign of a rootless and ruthless international capitalism can be traced back at least to the sentiments expressed in Theodor Fontane’s essay on “Der deutsche Gasthof, das kosmopolitische Hotel, und die Engländer” (The German Inn, the Cosmopolitan Hotel, and the English, 1867). There, Fontane’s German contemporaries share an anger about the social shifts that saw “the vast majority of hotels, which are increasingly . . . replacing the good and honest German inns wherever the cosmopolitan stream of tourists arrives.” With their “pure national arrogance, which is based on the coarsest pride in money” (G, 374), the masses of English travelers had indeed become “a genuine nuisance” (G, 373), particularly in their regular success in securing the better rooms. In contrast, German tourists felt frequently slighted by their substandard accommodation in English hotels “in a kind of cave room, . . . which receives its light from a similarly dim corridor” (G, 376). Fontane concludes that the situation is not a
matter of anti-German hostility but rather “as nearly everything nowadays, a question of money and ownership, rather than of nationality” (G, 376).

Roth’s construction of the hotel touches on “The Hotel Lobby,” an essay written by eminent Weimar cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer between 1922 and 1925 as part of a larger piece on the detective novel. Kracauer sees the hotel lobby as the modern inversion of the house of prayer, where adherence to a universal code had assured the subject of its rooted status in a community. The hotel lobby, in contrast, represents a negative universality that reflects the total reification and lacking essence of the modern individual, for “in the hotel lobby what emerges is the inessential foundation at the basis of rational socialization” (HL, 179). The humans populating the lobby display the rootless and vacuous condition of modern society: “Lacking any and all relation, they drip down into the vacuum” (HL, 176). In different ways, Zweig’s 1918 essay “Bei den Sorglosen” (Visiting the Carefree) had portrayed the hotel as the site of a modern human vacuity and social indifference, which becomes supremely obscene in the context of the war. The rich take flight to luxury hotels to escape from the war-ravaged cities with their disturbing poverty and the desolate proletariat. They dance at costume balls, “nowhere a human face among them,” while “Europe falls in ruin. The gypsy band fiddles. Ten thousand people die every day” (S, 111, 110). The absence of social ties and the concerns of the rich echo in the jarring shapes of the gigantic hotels they inhabit, which stand

impudent . . . their hard foreheads facing the scenery, unconcerned, whether their insolent presence destroys that wonderfully harmonious line, equally indifferent toward that other world and the humans which they house. (S, 106)

Hotel Savoy, then, closely ties the vacuous condition of the modern human to the war-ravaged society of Roth’s day. In later years, this ambiguous portrayal of the hotel yielded to Roth’s wholehearted and ironic celebration of the hotel as the site of the cosmopolitan. His 1929 essay, “Arrival in the Hotel,” regards the hotel as a sort of “fatherland” where “people seem to come together . . . and at least appear to be what they should always be: children of the world.” Echoes of Kracauer’s “Hotel Lobby” are discernable when the narrator of Roth’s essay exclaims his love for “the ‘impersonal’ quality of that room, as a monk may love his cell” (HY, 156). The lobby “is home and the world, foreign and familiar, my ancestorless gallery!” (HY, 159). In this nationally uninscribed space, Roth’s narrator decides “to write about my friends, the hotel personnel. Such characters they are! Cosmopolites! Students of humanity! Ex-
pert readers of languages and souls! No Internationale like theirs! They are the true internationals! (Patriotism only begins with the owners of the hotel.)” (HY, 159). The hotel comes to be the global home of the mundivagant cosmopolitan, unfettered by the claims of national rootedness.

In Roth’s portrayal of the Hotel Savoy, too, class rather than national homeland emerges as the central dividing line. Dan is among the novel’s legions of defeated Czech, German, Polish, and Serb soldiers who have become modern nomads. The war has destroyed not only their sense of home but also all their possessions and personal ties. After years of having wandered westward to return to their homes, these men now flood the small border town. “They had gone to war proud, strong men” (HS, 77), but their boots have grown dusty and worn from their long wanderings. In their rootlessness and deindividuated state, these defeated soldiers resemble the Wandering Jew, which was seen to embody the nomadic essence of the Jews: “They have all travelled the same road in their grey clothes, the dust of their wandering years on their feet, on their faces. It is as if they belonged to the rain. They are as grey and as enduring” (HS, 114).

Living in barracks without latrines, these broken men defecate in the street and no longer seek regular work, preferring instead to steal food from peasants and beg. Although he, too, has suffered through the war experience, Dan occupies a privileged position vis-à-vis these defeated soldiers. His difference implicitly derives from his predicament as an assimilated Jew and bourgeois intellectual. Dan’s role as the first-person narrator, a function imbuing him with access to subjectivity, and his residence at the hotel are the external signs of this privilege. As Roth suggests throughout his writings, the Jews, a people beyond borders who have survived centuries of ostracism, persecution, and expulsion, have created a historical and temporal rootedness beyond fixed geographical or national affiliations. Through their mobile and heterogeneous identity, the Jews thus appear better equipped than others to cope with modern rootlessness and prefigure the particularist universality that forms the precondition of the cosmopolitan.

The nomadic condition marks all Jewish protagonists in the novel regardless of whether they are religious or assimilated. In his 1927 essay, The Wandering Jews, Roth suggests that the Jews’ centuries of wandering, initially out of sheer necessity to flee from persecution, have produced in the Eastern Jew in particular an inadvertent drive to roam that now marks their modern condition.63 Centuries of persecution and ostracism have rendered all Jews rootless and unproductive nomads. The religious Jews, who comprise the vast majority of Jews, epitomize the unproductive nomad, who roams the land that feeds him
without developing any ties to it: “For the most part, Eastern Jews experience the countryside only as beggars or vagrants. The majority don’t understand the soil that feeds them” (WJ, 7). At the same time, these religious Jews represent the cosmopolitan prototype that writers such as Zweig, Roth, and Feuchtwanger see as emergent in Jewish tradition from its beginning: “This Jew is not a ‘nationalist’ in the Western sense. He is God’s Jew” (WJ, 30).

This type is reflected in the impoverished religious Jews who populate the other side of town in Hotel Savoy. These absurd and diminished creatures, who stand begging by the Jewish cemetery fence and in the alleys “like human cypresses” (HS, 48), evoke the figure of the Eternal or Wandering Jew, who represents the timeless and thus fixed nomadic condition of the Jews:

We come into a little alley. Jews are standing about, strolling in the middle of the street, carrying umbrellas ludicrously rolled and with crooked shafts. They either stand still looking thoughtful or else walk ceaselessly to and fro. Here, one will disappear. There, one will emerge from a house door, look enquiringly to left and to right and begin to stroll about. Silent as shadows, people pass each other. It is an assembly of ghosts and the long dead gather here. For thousands of years this race has been wandering in narrow alleys. (HS, 37)

According to The Wandering Jews, the Jew’s drive to wander is born of centuries of persecution and war. It is epitomized in a group that Roth broadly defines as “the emigrants.” These individuals have fled to the United States, which Roth time and again describes in negative terms, as well as Vienna, Berlin, and Paris, which Roth presents as Western Europe’s very different Jewish nodal points. Tired of poverty and nationalistic strife, the emigrants display the budding cosmopolitan awareness that also marks Hotel Savoy’s narrator, Dan. Originating “from the Russian borderlands, not from Russia itself,” the emigrant believes that today’s “national squabbles” in the West “are just a hollow echo of yesterday’s; that the West has a vision of Europe, which, maybe one day, not before time and not without suffering, will ripen into a vision of the world” (WJ, 10).

Dan’s birth to Russian Jewish emigrants thus emerges as an important element in his own incipient cosmopolitan awareness, which Roth implicitly associates with the Russian Revolution and its promotion of a new universalist society beyond class and ethnic divides. At the same time, The Wandering Jews declares this society impeded by “the unnatural social structure of the Jews” (WJ, 109). The Jews’ predominantly middle-class characteristics invariably set
them apart from their non-Jewish counterparts. This problem materializes in Dan, who sympathizes with the town’s striking workers but ultimately fails to offer practical support.

*Hotel Savoy* shows how the social, political, and discursive chasms of the post–World War I period impede even the notional existence of the cosmopolitan, at which it nonetheless gestures. The novel’s Jewish protagonists remain limited by their class-based and religious affiliations to catalyze a genuine cosmopolitan awareness, whereas the non-Jews cannot bring about effective social change because they refuse to address the problem of antisemitism. The hotel stands as the only symbol of universal potential, and it is negatively charged. In the end, the striking workers destroy the hotel in their attempts to target the Jewish industrialist Bloomfield, whom they wrongly blame for their inhumane working conditions.

Even more clearly than *Hotel Savoy*, Roth’s later major novels, *Radetzky March* (1932) and *The Emperor’s Tomb* (1938), foreground a recurring cast of Jewish and southern Slavic protagonists to construct the liminal subjectivities engendered by the southern borderlands as cosmopolitan prototypes.\(^{64}\) In doing so, Roth attempts to distance the Jewish type from the antisemitic discourse about Jews, disease, and the city.\(^{65}\) Of course, his new construction, which instead links the Jew to the healthy Slavic countryside, is no less problematic since it merely reverses the racialized discourse about the healthy racial type springing from the healthy soil. Consequently, Roth now depicts the political malaise of the empire as wrought by its dominant German population in Vienna, whose rabid nationalism has driven the empire to the brink of destruction.

*Radetzky March* centers around three male generations of the Trotta family, whose trajectory mirrors the rise and decline of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The empire and its Jews, which are closely tied together through the last Trottas’ apparent Jewish affinities, represent the particularist and universalist aspects of the cosmopolitan condition, which cannot emerge fully into reality under the current historical conditions. Similarly to Dan in *Hotel Savoy*, Carl Joseph in *Radetzky March* represents a nascent rather than actualized cosmopolitan awareness. This emerges, for example, in Carl Joseph’s realization that other countries have their own history and society, which causes him to begin to relativize his political and social circumstances. Roth emphasizes deterritorialized ethnic affiliations by privileging the liminal subjectivities of the borderlands through his intertwined images of the Trottas, who are descended from ennobled Slovenian peasants, and the Jews of the Slavic provinces. In so doing, Roth undermines the poisoned nationalistic agendas that he and other
Jewish writers still perceived in a rooted cosmopolitanism. Instead, Roth suggests the contingent regional allegiances that he sees prefigured in the dual monarchy’s Jews. They form the model for the deterritorialized “Oriental” nationality that he had outlined in *The Wandering Jews*:

> Only in the East do people live who are unconcerned with their “nationality,” in the Western European sense. They speak several languages, are themselves the product of several generations of mixed marriages, and fatherland for them is whichever country happens to conscript them. (WJ, 15)\(^{66}\)

Even the assimilated Eastern Jews consider themselves a nation, Roth contends, and modern Zionism could thus only have arisen in Austria, where representatives of all the country’s nations fought in the Viennese parliament for their national rights and privileges. Jews, the only nation in the empire without a designated territory, were the notable exception. The setting nonetheless became “the cradle of modern Zionism,” which was “founded by an Austrian journalist. No one else could have founded it” (WJ, 15). As a consequence of its Western European origins, Zionism’s territorial aspirations implicitly break with the Orient’s inherent cosmopolitanism and must invariably lead to conflict and war with Palestine’s Arab population. Therefore, “the immigration of young Jews into Palestine increasingly suggests a kind of Jewish Crusade, because, unfortunately, they also shoot” (WJ, 19).

The treatment of Zionism is notably absent from *Radetzky March*, which presents the empire’s seminomadic, deterritorialized country Jews and Slavs as the cosmopolitan prototype. Roth’s close interweaving of the Trottas, the empire, and its Jews suggests this as a specifically Austrian predicament. Carl Joseph is implicitly linked to the stereotype of the Jew’s flawed masculinity by his lack of riding skills and his inability to integrate himself with the other men in his regiment. Furthermore, the Jewish doctor, Max Demant, remains Carl Joseph’s only close friend in his mostly Ukrainian and Rumanian regiment in the Moravian borderlands.

Both Carl Joseph and Demant represent the liminal subjectivities that Roth sees as spawning the cosmopolitan prototype. Whereas Carl Joseph, “a descendant of a Slovenian veteran and the extraordinary hero of Solferino” (RM, 43), originates from Slovenian peasants in the monarchy’s southern borderlands, Demant is the grandson of a Galician innkeeper in one of the Eastern border towns.\(^{67}\) Franz Joseph’s politics of tolerance toward all his subjects have allowed both Carl Joseph and Demant to rise from their lowly social and mar-
ginal ethnic origins and become equal citizens of the monarchy. As Carl Joseph’s father writes to his son, “Fate has brought us from being simple border peasants to Austrian subjects. Let us remain so” (RM, 138). Whereas the father thus feels the Habsburgs’ city of Vienna to be his home, Carl Joseph rejects this world when he asks to be stationed on the Ukrainian-Russian border. This narrative construction mirrors the processes of nineteenth-century Jewish assimilation and its early twentieth-century countermovement, which Shulamith Volkov has termed dissimulation.68

While these linkages indeed suggest the parallel crises of the Jewish condition and the dual monarchy,69 they are also salient for Roth’s construction of the cosmopolitan, which emerges precisely from the complex and often uneasy relationship between the empire’s center and its margins, Vienna and the borderlands, which signify the universal and the particular. Roth’s close intertwining of the monarchy, the Trottas, and the Jews conveys the close interdependence between the monarchy’s institutionalized humanism and its particularist subjects in producing the cosmopolitan condition.

The hotel and the café in the Ukrainian-Russian border town, Burdlaki, where Carl Joseph von Trotta is stationed, once again represent the ubiquitous institutions of the empire’s universalizing mission whose encounter with its liminal Jewish and Slavic subjects engenders the cosmopolitan prototype. In turn, the region’s numerous peddlers, among them many Jews, display the seminomadic, transient rootedness that lies at the heart of Roth’s suspended cosmopolitanism:

Always in transit, always on the move, with quick speech and a clear understanding, they would have been equipped to conquer half the world, if they had understood the world at all. But they did not. Because they lived far away from it, between east and west, jammed in between night and day, a kind of living ghost that was sprung from the night and went about in the daytime. Did I say they lived as though “jammed in”? The nature of their homeland never gave them that sensation. Nature had set an endless and impressive horizon around these frontier people, and put them in the midst of green forests and blue hills. And even when they walked in the shade of dark pine forests, they could reckon themselves favoured by God. (RM, 139–40)

Both peaceful and dynamic as these images may be, they belong to the agrarian world of the past, which though it does not yet know it, is being swept away by the war. Only the Jews, lacking territory and thus a firm location
within the ensuing battles of the nations and classes, represent a moment of passive resistance to the violent fervor gripping the world. The Jews “were saluting an extraordinary Sabbath, a Sabbath of blood,” making each of their houses “already like a tomb. Death itself had lit the candles” (RM, 344). The Jews’ loud mourning of every one of their sons who has been drafted into war further suggests them as the prime victims of the rising age of mass atrocity, in which the humanistic legacy of the empire will be violently destroyed.

**Lion Feuchtwanger: The Empire Strikes Back**

Feuchtwanger’s *Josephus* trilogy (1932–42), based on a historical figure, ancient Judean historiographer Flavius Josephus, represents the transition of German Jewish cosmopolitanist writing into the exile period. The first novel in the trilogy, *Der jüdische Krieg* (The Jewish War) (1932), marks Feuchtwanger’s most concerted attempt to defend the cosmopolitan against the rising National Socialist peril. Like Zweig, Feuchtwanger and his German Jewish cosmopolitanism railed against the arbitrary administrative boundary of birth and national affiliation that determines one’s friends and enemies. Natan Sznaider views Feuchtwanger as “trying desperately to protect a European cosmopolitanism composed of Jewish, Greek, Christian, and Muslim identities against the rise of National Socialism.”

Such composite cosmopolitanisms were not rare at the time. Oskar Maria Graf’s liberal Catholic cosmopolitanism originated in Leo Tolstoy’s primitive Christianity as well as his national patriotism. Tolstoy wrote: “If men would only finally grasp that they are not children of some fatherland but of God the father!” Oskar Maria Graf, in turn, argued, “The world must become provincial. Only then will it become human.” This socialist “provincialism” colored his well-known 1933 response to the National Socialists’ attempt to invite him “to join the ranks of exponents of the ‘new’ German spirit!” Graf’s rejoinder underwrote his own understanding of the cosmopolitan: “The proponents of this barbaric nationalism, which has nothing, absolutely nothing at all, to do with what it means to be German, have the nerve to claim me as one of their own in ‘spirit,’ to place me on their white list, a list that can only be a blacklist in the eyes of the world’s conscience!” Being cosmopolitan could mean being German, but being German encompassed a European cosmopolitanism of inclusion.

Feuchtwanger had already pronounced the death of the cosmopolitan in his world-famous novel, *Jud Süss* (1924), which treated the real-life fig-
ure of the eighteenth-century court Jew Josef Süss Oppenheimer. Together with Lothar Mendes’s 1934 British film *Jew Süss*, itself made in defense of the Jews, Feuchtwanger’s novel inspired the National Socialist propaganda film, *Jud Süss* (1940), which distorted the pro-Jewish constructs of both previous versions into twisted portrayals of Jews. Feuchtwanger modeled his Süss on the assassinated German Jewish industrialist, economic theorist, and foreign minister Walther Rathenau. In portraying Süss as an early prototype of the Jewish cosmopolitan, Feuchtwanger invokes Rathenau’s public perception as a cosmopolitan, which was closely linked to his role as German foreign minister in 1922 and formed the antisemitic justification for his murder.

Both Feuchtwanger’s Süss and Josephus ultimately remain singular figures, “free-floating intelligentsia” in the sense of Karl Mannheim, as Wulf Köpke has asserted with regard to Josephus in particular. Their cosmopolitanism is doomed to fail under the conditions of violent antisemitism. At the same time, the Josephus trilogy’s first volume, published in the same year as Roth’s *Radetzky March*, still asserts the viability of the diaspora as the cradle of the cosmopolitan sensibility. Like Zweig and Roth, Feuchtwanger sees traditional Jewish religion as the core of a universalism that will spawn the cosmopolitan awareness under the conditions of diaspora. For Feuchtwanger, this awareness does not simply remain unactualized under the imperfect political conditions of the present. Instead, he asserts, the diasporic Jewish writer constitutes the actualization of the cosmopolitan ideal.

Like Zweig’s and Roth’s works, *Der jüdische Krieg* rejects Zionism, which charts the path of the ancient Hebrew warriors from the Hanukkah revolt to Masada, and instead traces Flavius Josephus’s path from nationalistic Judean to diasporic cosmopolitan. The novel depicts the life of Josephus, who was born into the Judean upper caste of Jewish priests, in Alexandria and Rome before his return to Judea to participate in the anti-Roman Jewish uprising between 66 and 67 B.C.E. He is taken into Roman captivity and released two years later, only to return to Judea to participate in the anti-Roman Jewish uprising between 66 and 67 B.C.E. He is taken into Roman captivity and released two years later, only to return to Judea with the Roman forces that besiege Jerusalem in 70 B.C.E. The novel closes with Josephus’s decision to write a chronicle of the war, an undertaking that will render him the greatest Jewish writer of the period. Through this trajectory, Feuchtwanger implicitly criticizes those Weimar Jews who failed to embrace cosmopolitanism and instead clung to their particularist Jewish affiliations. As Feuchtwanger had declared in his essay “Was ist Wahrheit?” (What Is Truth?), the Roman Empire’s cosmopolitan politics had made “the United States of Europe a reality,” but one group had anachronistically insisted on its particularity. The Roman Jews had sought to
be “national . . . amid a cosmopolitan world.”  

The stages of Josephus’s political development in the novel invoke the conflicting and overlapping discourses of Zionism, Jewish assimilation, and cosmopolitanism during the Weimar era, closing with a clear affirmation of cosmopolitanism. The novel’s portrayals of the Roman Empire and its Jews thus mirror the Weimar era at the crossroads of war and peace and of nationalism and cosmopolitanism. At the beginning of the novel, Rome, like Weimar, arises like a phoenix from the ashes of Nero’s fire. The city is being rebuilt by the new emperor in a wave of widespread optimism and revitalized life. Like Weimar, the Rome of the novel is a Janus-faced beast of humanistic progress through science and technology on the one hand and inhumane barbarity on the other.

Positioned at the center of the ancient world, Rome’s multiethnic population, which is held together by the unified philosophy and legislature of Greco-Roman culture, reflects the modern cosmopolitan predicament. Likewise, Zweig’s 1932 essay, “The Development of the European Idea,” had described Rome as the dawn of the cosmopolitan idea, since Rome “first lent Europe a unified shape.”  

And indeed, Feuchtwanger’s construction of Rome’s transcontinental reach—its heterogeneous mix of populations and its enshrined politics of tolerance toward other religions, including Judaism, as long as they do not proselytize—implicitly reflects the particularist universality of Kantian cosmopolitanism. At the same time, Feuchtwanger, like Zweig and Roth, promotes through Josephus a deterritorialized vision of the cosmopolitan that inherently opposes the exclusive particularism of Jews and non-Jews. Furthermore, Feuchtwanger, too, stresses the importance of the borderlands in creating the cosmopolitan sensibility. Josephus’s transformation from Judean nationalist to cosmopolitan subject is thus catalyzed in Alexandria, which is, after Rome . . . the greatest city of the known world and certainly the most modern. . . . Standing at the intersecting point of three continents, at the meeting place of the Orient and the Occident, and on the main route to India, Alexandria has raised itself to the position of the greatest trading centre of the world. (J, 297)

By ancient standards a Moloch, this metropolis invokes the fast-paced interwar Berlin with its greed for life and amusement. Alexandria is the crucible of East and West, with inhabitants from all corners of the world, just as Berlin in the early twentieth century was the scene of wide-scale immigration.
of Eastern European Jews. Abandoning their origins, Alexandria’s newcomers quickly embrace the city’s vibrant art scene, its loudmouthed humor, and above all its constant quest for new thrills. Likewise, the city’s Jews mirror the predicament of Berlin’s largely acculturated Jews, who formed the largest constituent of German Jewry during the Weimar period. Josephus’s encounter with the highly confident, wealthy, and educated Alexandrian Jews, who have reconciled their Bible with the Greek world and have “skilfully and harmoniously adapted their Jewish qualities to the forms of life and the general ideas of the Grecian Orient” (J, 301), is the catalyst for his budding cosmopolitan awareness. While in Alexandria, Josephus writes a famous poem that is later titled “Psalms of the Citizen of the World” in which he lets the Jewish God speak to the nations of the world. Having poured out his spirit over the nations, God demands that they traverse beyond their borders and roam the earth rather than grow roots into the soil, for “a tree has only one food. / But man nourishes himself on all things / That I have created beneath the heavens” (J, 312).

Feuchtwanger constructs Josephus as the first modern Jew and Jewish writer per se. A Romanized Jew on the empire’s margins, Josephus embodies the synthesis of deterritorialized particularist and universalist sentiments. He is the product of Judaism, with its universal teachings, and the European civilization that arose from Rome, a multiethnic entity that has not yet transcended nationalism despite its politics of tolerance. The Jewish cosmopolitan thus remains a singular figure in his time:

He was the first man to live deliberately in accordance with this conception. He was a new kind of man, no longer a Jew, nor a Greek, nor a Roman, but a citizen of the whole civilized world. (J, 303)

Like Zweig and Roth, Feuchtwanger positions traditional Judaism as the universalist prototype that emerges into the cosmopolitan in its encounter with European culture. For alone among the peoples, Jews worship a god who has no image and whose invisibility signifies his universality. The Jewish prohibition against making an image predicates the existence of the Jewish writer, for “the word and the image mutually excluded each other” (J, 60), and the Jew must thus turn to words. By implication, then, the Jew represents the cosmopolitanist sensibility and its dissemination through literature as the universal art. Of course, Josephus as the first Jewish historian and writer of world literature reflects Feuchtwanger’s self-positioning as a Jewish cosmopolitan and historical novelist within German and world literature.

Representing the Jewish writer in European culture, Josephus functions as
a mediator between Judea and Rome, East and West. Feuchtwanger implicitly wrote against Oswald Spengler’s creation of essential frontiers between these political, cultural, and territorial entities. Spengler had opposed the idea of history and culture as a linear progress “from Homer or Adam . . . through Jerusalem, Rome, Florence and Paris,”78 which he sees as having exhausted itself not least because Paris implicitly stands for the commune and the revolution as well as the twentieth-century decadence of the cafés, artists, and sexual licentiousness of the Left Bank. Feuchtwanger, in turn, constructs the Jew as an essential link in the chain of cultural and social progress reaching from ancient Greece and Judea through to Rome as the beginning of the Western world. In the Jewish War, all three entities essentially predicate each other in the creation of the cosmopolitan. Its materialism has led the West to merely plunder the East’s physical riches, “bring[ing] back pearls and spices and curious animals” while “leav[ing] its best treasures, its books, lying where they are” (J, 53). Having lived as both a Judean and Roman, Josephus is uniquely positioned to introduce the Romans to these cultural riches in shape of the Jews’ great history and literature. Until the modern era, Josephus receives only praise from first his Greek and Roman contemporaries and later his Christian audiences. His Jewish readers, however, reject his writing because it lacks the expected nationalistic fervor, written, as it was seen, by a renegade from the Maccabean cause.

Feuchtwanger stresses the unique position of the cosmopolitan Jew in his contrasting portrayals of Roman and Judean nationalistic excess. As the novel makes clear, the Roman Empire’s benign face is essentially predicated on colonial conquest and domination, which have created the empire’s political, economic, and cultural foundations. Although this portrayal invokes Spengler’s claim that Rome had conquered the world only because its subjects failed to resist (DW, 1:36 n. 23), Feuchtwanger poses the Jews as the noteworthy exception to the ancient world’s passivity vis-à-vis its Roman conquerors. Feuchtwanger draws on the Zionist image of the ancient warrior Jew, which sought to remasculate the Jew in the diaspora. In the novel, Judeans become the butt of Roman hatred because they alone have resisted and hindered its further expansion:

The world was Roman, the world was pacified through the harmonious Roman-Greek system. Only the Jews held out and refused to recognise the blessings of this all-powerful organisation which bound the peoples together. The great trade routes to India, destined to carry Greek culture to the distant Orient, could not be rendered secure until this rebellious, stiff-necked people were humbled to the dust. (J, 66)
Rome’s inhumane face emerges in its treatment of three incarcerated Judean rebels, whose brutal slave labor in a Roman brickworks points back to the World War I atrocities as well as anticipates the Holocaust:

The three men were squatting side by side. They were half-naked, their clothes hung upon them in tatters, their faces were leaden. Round their ankles they wore rings to which chains were attached; on their foreheads they were branded with the letter E. Their hair was shorn bare to their very skulls. (J, 31)

Again later in the novel, Feuchtwanger eerily foreshadows inmate experiments in National Socialist concentration camps, such as the SS drowning experiments at Dachau, when Roman military doctors select Judean captives to study the statistical relationship between physical strength and the dying process during crucifixion. The dehumanizing treatment of these prisoners is at least partially driven by the Romans’ growing hatred of the Jews, which reflects the rising antisemitism of the Weimar era.

Although the novel gives the Jewish nationalistic cause some credibility, given the Romans’ aggressive politics of expansion, it similarly rejects the latter for its practices of violence and exclusion. The Judean war thus results in the reckless sacrifice of Jewish lives despite the evident futility of this struggle. At the same time, Josephus faces ostracism from within the Jewish community. Extremist Alexandrian Jews violently oppose his cosmopolitan verses, while the established Jewish community declares them a heresy. Such radical Jewish positions are clearly criticized when the first volume charges Judeans with always insisting “on executing their private whims” and having a “mania for being in the right” (J, 23). Only in the later volumes of the trilogy, which Feuchtwanger completed while in hiding in exile, did he reverse this stance.

Cosmopolitanism Tottering on the Brink of Catastrophe

In 1932–33, however, all did not seem lost. Whereas Walter Benjamin and Willi Haas lamented the decline of the cosmopolitan in “Vom Weltbürger zum Großbürger” (From World Citizen to Upper-Class Citizen), Prague-born literary scholar Erich von Kahler propounded the now familiar idea of a Jewish mission of universality (“jüdischer Weltauftrag”) in Israel unter den Völkern (Israel among the Peoples). The volume would fall victim to the National Socialists’ book destruction immediately after its initial appearance. Likewise,
Zweig’s “The Development of the European Idea” once again positioned the Jews at the center of the modern European idea. Zweig suggested, as Feuchtwanger did in Josephus, that this universal dream first achieved political, linguistic, and legal reality in the Roman Empire, which created the foundation of the contemporary European idea. Ruling over the “still unformed and intellectually stifled European nations,” Rome had created the peoples and cultures of Europe today (SW, 189). As Zweig contends, Rome “was the first and, one feels tempted to say, last to give Europe a completely unified shape, for never again was the world more unified in structure than it was then” (SW, 189). Zweig’s description of the “dreadful intellectual and moral devastation” (SW, 190) that the empire’s fall brought to Europe reflects the European predicament at the crossroads of two world wars.

The arts—in particular, music and literature—have always upheld the old idea of unity. In presenting the arts and sciences as the deterritorialized bearers of the cosmopolitan, heralded by his twentieth-century (and very Jewish) reading of Goethe’s concept of world literature, Zweig once more asserts his essential right to consider himself “a European, a citizen of this as yet nonexistent State of Europe” (SW, 209). It is a lost call to humanity, made on the brink of the total destruction of the old Europe and its Jews in smoke and ash.