CHAPTER 16

# COSMOPOLITANISM AND MODERNISM

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At the outset of Jean Rhys' first novel, *Quartet*, a rootless English chorus girl reflects on her delightful but "haphazard" existence in Paris, where she lives in a Montmartre hotel with her Polish husband, a backstreet "*commissionaire*" of art (8, 17).[1] From its very first pages, the novel has all the markings of a modernist cosmopolitan narrative: the deracinated Marya and the "alien" Stephan drifting through Paris, foreign languages in the streets, and artists' studios and international cafés everywhere; even Marya's shabby little hotel is called the Hôtel de l'Univers. But the novel tells an unexpectedly brutal story about Marya's increasing isolation, sexual entrapment, and spiritual persecution in the world's most cosmopolitan city. *Quartet* is, in fact, a perfectly anti-cosmopolitan novel, though not in the conventional sense. Where most of the anti-cosmopolitan critiques over the past two centuries have argued from positions of nationalism, or nativism, or anti-imperialism, or sexual or racial conservatism, each in their way seeing cosmopolitanism as a corrosive force, Rhys' novel faults cosmopolitanism for failing to materialize. What should be the setting for cosmopolitan world-making—rootlessness in Paris—turns out to support the worst kinds of parochialisms and the most conservative forms of personal coercion. *Quartet* dramatizes the failure of cosmopolitan promises, even as those promises remain unarticulated and only obliquely suggested within the pages of the novel. In its critique of a cosmopolitan sense of belonging that should, but does not, happen, *Quartet* resembles many other modernist works which invoke cosmopolitanism as a set of fragile and evasive normative ideals.

Readers of this volume are undoubtedly aware of the role that the concept of cosmopolitanism plays in a range of discussions involving globalization, transnationalism, indigenization, localism, parochialism, nationalism, universalism, and, of course, modernism. In the past two decades, new scholarship on cosmopolitanism has appeared in multiple disciplines, including anthropology, philosophy, political science, sociology, and literary studies, to name only the most prominent fields; and this new work has informed and invigorated modernist studies, particularly as the field has sought to address an ever broader range of global cultural production. Late nineteenth- and twentieth-century incarnations of cosmopolitanism share with modernism many of the same conditions of possibility, including accelerated globalization and burgeoning world market systems, imperial crises and the falling dominoes of decolonization, and new networks of mass media and mass transportation, all of which, in various combinations, contributed to expanded zones and concentrated experiences of intercultural contact. Indeed the coextensive concerns of modernism and cosmopolitanism are such that one might suppose modernism always to be informed by the cosmopolitan, even if, as in the example of *Quartet*, it rarely conveys a viable picture of cosmopolitanism.

In what follows, I will lay out in a general way some of the main features of cosmopolitanism, and some of the discussions generated by its perceived promises and failures. This will take me in several directions, both historically and theoretically, but my particular interest lies in the way that ideas about and expectations for cosmopolitanism are transmitted through global modernist literary culture. My ultimate aim here is not one of epistemological closure: I am not seeking to define or even to descry a particular form of cosmopolitanism suited to one or another theory of modernism, global or otherwise. Rather, I am guided by more pragmatic questions of genealogy: that is, what kind of cultural work is done by the idea of cosmopolitanism as it appears in the literature, art, and aesthetic theories of modernism? How do the questions posed in the cosmopolitanism debates of the past few centuries inflect, or determine, or belie the putative worldliness of modernism? What are we to make, for example, of the "virtual cosmopolitanism" described by Partha Mitter in his account of the exchange between painters from Berlin and Calcutta in the 1920s? Or the loaded expectations for interracial cosmopolitanism in novels like *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* or *Infants of the Spring*? Or the disastrous undercutting of the political stakes of cosmopolitanism in Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*, or Kazuo Ishiguro's screenplay about Shanghai in the 1930s, *The White Countess*? How should we read Georg Simmel's prewar cosmopolitan sociology in the light of the crises of postwar nationalism (to say nothing of anti-Semitism) across Europe? And what role does cosmopolitanism play in the complicated emergence of decolonizing literatures in the early twentieth century in countries like Ireland and Venezuela and India? These heuristic questions about forms of belonging (and unbelonging) will help to direct me through the congested territory of cosmopolitanism.



## Cosmopolitanisms, Old and New

To begin with, the term is notoriously overdetermined. "Cosmopolitanism" may designate an individual's attitude or a set of practices in the world: a cultivated stance of detachment from one's culture of origin, for example, or, more positively, a stance of active interest in, engagement with, and belonging to "parts of the world other than one's nation" (Robbins, "Comparative Cosmopolitanisms," 250), or a practice of unconditional receptivity to cultural others; or an active repudiation of parochialism, or a rejection of the restrictive bonds of the *patrias*. These stances of detachment and antiparochialism may be connected to principles of universal fellow-feeling; such were the putative foundations of Stoic and early Christian cosmopolitanism, particularly as it was elaborated by the likes of Cicero and Marcus Aurelius. But they may also reflect a less altruistic or more instrumentalist agenda, one of personal political detachment in the service of personal gain or individualist nonconformity: Diogenes, the first to proclaim himself a "citizen of the world," seems largely to have meant that he personally rejected the constricting claims of local conventions and political allegiances.[2]

"Cosmopolitan" may also describe the products or spaces of contact among cultures or cultural representatives, which would be characterized by mutual, palpable, interactive, frictional forms of change where such contact has occurred. This use of the term carries a strong geographical inflection: metropoles, maritime communities, colonial and decolonized regions, international cities, universities, bohemian quarters, migratory crossroads, trade routes, and other zones of sustained intercultural contact are typically adduced as the sites where "actually existing" cosmopolitanism may be found. Discussions of this kind of cosmopolitanism frequently address the "where" and the "what" of cosmopolitanism, as it were—the situated negotiations of cultural differences in mixed communities, for example, or the local effects of globalizing economies, or the adaptive shifts in aesthetics and values accompanying sustained intercultural exposure.

Often enough, these discussions of cosmopolitan conditions are grounded in another more foundational understanding of the concept. This third category of cosmopolitanism is normative in scope. It designates a planetary philosophical or political project based in the recognition of humanity as a universal community, a project that aims to hold governments and institutions to nonnegotiable standards for economic equality, social justice, and the "right to have rights," in Hannah Arendt's phrase.

As the range of these uses suggests, the concept is malleable, speculative, subject to revision and cooptation, and vulnerable to all kinds of criticism for its explicit universalism or its implicit moralism, or for the threat it poses to "defensive" nationalism, inherited traditions, and other forms of cultural solidarity that could serve as bulwarks against global expansionism, or for its foundational faith in

rationalism and progress, or for its record of elitism, its historical orientation to the global north, its uncritical presumptions about mobility, its potential for complicity with capitalism and imperialism, and so forth. According to one representative critical position, for example, the detached "view from nowhere" claimed by nineteenth-century antiparochial cosmopolites was actually "a view from somewhere and from sometime, namely from the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century"; on this view, cosmopolitanism is nothing more than "a higher form of parochialism," a false universalism mistaking itself for a picture of the world (Van der Veer 47).

Defenders of cosmopolitanism, meanwhile, point to the role that the concept historically has played in the propagation of intellectual and religious freedom, in the protection or acceptance of marginalized or persecuted populations (particularly "rootless"—that is to say, nonnational—Jews, homosexuals, and women), and in international efforts to stem the brutal effects of radical nationalism and imperialism. In recent decades, many of these defenses have been couched as modifications of the term, as evidenced in the latest round of pitched discussions about cosmopolitanism.[3] As has been the case with so many other putative universalisms (including universalism itself), these recent lexical qualifications are aimed chiefly at toning down the universal and foregrounding the local, or at undoing hierarchies of center and periphery. Thus "cosmopolitanism" has been modified by such terms as rooted, situated, discrepant, vernacular, critical, postcolonial, agonistic, and limited. Some of these modifications involve complicated schematic revisions. Walter Mignolo, for instance, distinguishes between cosmopolitanism and "global designs," and then between "cosmopolitan projects" and "critical cosmopolitanism"—the last of which he champions for the fact that it "comprises projects located in the exteriority [of modernity] and issuing forth from the colonial difference" (159). With proliferating qualifications like these, some proponents of a normative cosmopolitan ideal worry that the concept has been watered down to a pleasant tonic of cultural celebration, or that it may be facing extinction altogether. But it may in fact be the case that the sheer energy spent on finding ways to reframe cosmopolitanism references a widespread attempt to "add more theory" (in Kant's words) to a putatively workable theory that hasn't yet worked out in practice" ("On the Old Saw" 42). In other words, the concept of cosmopolitanism, however warty or incomplete, may be indispensable to global thinking.

Kant discusses his commitment to the "duty" of theory in "On the Old Saw, 'That may be right in theory but it won't work in practice,'" an occasional essay in which he revisits the subject of cosmopolitanism (as he does in other more famous short pieces, including "Perpetual Peace" and "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose"). The view expressed in "On the Old Saw" that human nature nowhere appears "less lovable than in the relations of whole nations to each other" is crucial to the urgency with which Kant links principles of justice to world citizenship and international law ("On the Old Saw" 80). It also points to his persistent pessimism about the selfishness and aggression that



inhere in human nature and which must therefore be harnessed, through law, into a "cosmopolitan condition" of mutual assistance and security.[4] Indeed, in the third and final article of "Perpetual Peace," which holds that "The Law of World Citizenship Shall Be Limited to Conditions of Universal Hospitality," Kant elevates the duty of protecting the stranger's right to hospitality from a religious ethos into a responsibility of nations, which must be enforced by international law ("Perpetual Peace" 47). This business of international law, Kant acknowledges, is tricky, even "wild and fanciful" ("Universal History" 47)—who, after all, is going to formulate it or enforce it? But his commitment to a cosmopolitan model stems from his faith in theory: so long as the theory of cosmopolitanism "proceeds from the principle of justice," its potential results are more important than the doxa that says it will never work ("On the Old Saw" 81).

Derrida also repudiates this doxa of common sense in one of his own meditations on cosmopolitanism, in which he casts cosmopolitanism as at once impossible and utterly necessary. Derrida is thinking in particular of the need for cosmopolitan cities of refuge—cities where the stateless will and must be welcomed unconditionally—in a world where statelessness is, for millions of people, the condition of what Agamben has made familiar to us as *homo sacer*: bare life without political status. And indeed, a version of this concern runs through much of the new thinking about the paradoxes of cosmopolitanism: on the one hand, cosmopolitan theory offers a justification of the unconditional hospitality that a city of refuge signifies; on the other hand, cosmopolitan hospitality must be "controlled by the law and the state police" (Derrida 22). Another way to put this conundrum is to say that the freedom and equality promised by Kantian cosmopolitan theory are in practice tethered to the dubious regulatory mechanisms of bureaucratic modernity.[5]

Philosophical forms of cosmopolitanism deriving from Kant (sometimes called "old" cosmopolitanism) usually depend upon two things: a universalist assumption of a constitutive human quality—be it reason, or a natural sociability shared by humanity, or the human capacity for a consecrated spirit—and an implicit (indeed, originary) scenario of divided loyalties between local attachments and global ideals, in which the global inevitably wins out. And while there are many contemporary thinkers who embrace both of these components and aim to work through the theoretical and practical challenges they present—most notably and most powerfully, Martha Nussbaum (e.g., "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism")—there are at least as many who wish to distance themselves from this cosmopolitanism's normative universalism (e.g., its unfailing belief in the common denominator of a particular kind of reason), or from its diminishment of local/national cultures, or who worry—seriously—about the feasibility of institutional implementations of cosmopolitan ideals.

A recent exchange between Seyla Benhabib and Bonnie Honig may illustrate these stakes. In *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Benhabib calls cosmopolitanism "a philosophical project of mediations" and identifies her own Habermasian

cosmopolitanism as a normative philosophy based in "a universalist moral standpoint" that is upheld through communicative ethics and entails a moral obligation to justify one's actions through reason "in a moral conversation which potentially includes all of *humanity*" (19; 18).[6] But the very idea of this "conversation" requires that it be displaced and abstracted into a system of institutional channels that in the end may have very little to do with the actual fate of individuals on the earth. According to Honig, this system cannot really be trusted, given the "sedimentations of power and discretion that accrete in such institutional contexts" (117). The problem, for Honig, is not so much Benhabib's recourse to a moral standpoint—after all, most people who are looking to revise cosmopolitanism do so because they have some investment in questions of right and wrong. Rather, the problem is Benhabib's implicit faith in the juridical administration of cosmopolitan ideals. Honig's corrective concept, which she calls "agonistic cosmopolitics," includes but also "reaches beyond" institutional safeguards and imagines improvised, on-the-ground interventions into contemporary human rights crises, such as the designation of cities of refuge and the development of "underground railroads devoted to the remainders of the state system" (117–18). Believe in the old cosmopolitanism, Honig suggests, but cover your bets with the new.

Honig's agonistic cosmopolitics counts as one of the "new" cosmopolitanisms which, generally speaking, aim to rescue a program of ethical commitment to global others from the taint it acquired through its association with nineteenth- and twentieth-century Euro-U.S. expansionism. Other species of the new cosmopolitanism insist on a perspective that is precisely not Euro-U.S., such as Mignolo's critical cosmopolitanism mentioned above, or, famously, James Clifford's "discrepant cosmopolitanisms," formulated as a kind of theoretical retraction of his own earlier condemnation of cosmopolitanism. Moving away from a conventional understanding of the term "cosmopolitan" as a narrow descriptor of a class of people who have "the security and privilege to move about in relatively unconstrained ways," Clifford's newer version focuses on populations whose global movements are more likely the result of the "displacement and transplantation" undertaken by all kinds of people under all kinds of conditions, and as a result of "specific, often violent, histories of economic, political, and cultural interactions" (108; 107; 108).[7]

As we shall see, Clifford's neologism and others like it have been taken up by modernist critics who find in such terms a way to begin accounting for global modernisms flourishing beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries of the (one might say provincial) Anglo-European model. But before pursuing these more recent critical developments, and perhaps by way of providing some historical contextualization, I want to mention an aspect of nineteenth-century European thinking about worldliness that bears directly on twentieth-century fantasies of cosmopolitanism: that is, the question of racial identity and the perceived threat of deracination that haunts many developmental accounts of "civilization."[8]



## The Threat and the Promise: Race and Nation

With the early development of sociological inquiry and the concomitant rise of the so-called race sciences in the first third of the nineteenth century, questions about the mixing of populations dovetailed with concerns about cosmopolitanism's effects on national cultures. Auguste Comte, often called the father of sociology, believed that human progress depended upon the "progressive condensation of our species" (282), by which he meant the intensification of populations in geographical zones. Comte's goals for humanity were normative and positivist in the extreme: he advocated for a new class of social scientist (i.e., the sociologist), whose job it would be to review all of the sciences and "reduce their respective principles to the smallest number of general principles" (79); these principles could then be used to understand, predict, and ultimately control human nature through a kind of homogenization of shared moral principles.[9] The forms of integration and concentration taking place in "the great centers of population," he argued, would facilitate this control and thereby create a "new means not only of progress but of order, by neutralizing physical inequalities and affording a growing ascendancy to those intellectual and moral forces that are suppressed among a scanty population" (283). The desired end of *Cours de Philosophie Positive* [1830–1842] is a kind of monoculture arising not from a global technoculture or international capitalism (as Marx would have it), but rather from the ministrations of a "general mind" (73) and the gradual restriction of "individual divergences" (283), leading finally to a model of moral conformity that harmonizes the greater good.[10] On this reading, the human species will progress by way of the effacement of racial/local/individual traits; concentration and commingling in cities (of the kind characterizing cosmopolitan culture in general) will lead to a civilization flourishing through standardization and order; and for Comte, there is no progress without order.

But it is precisely the fear of such human standardization that motivates at least some of the race theory produced in the generation following Comte. Most famously—or infamously—Arthur de Gobineau's "Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races" [1853–1855] bemoans the fall of pure civilizations, which occurs when "the primordial race-unit is so broken up and swamped by the influx of foreign elements, that its effective qualities have no longer a sufficient freedom of action" (59). Gobineau isn't just talking about the fatal "crossing of blood" (62) in his melancholic narrative of human decline, although his main premise is that there are distinct human races that are ontologically unequal and hierarchical, and therefore subject to destruction through dilution. He's also talking about the permeability of national cultures: those nations with the most "vitality" (61) are also the least permeable and therefore the least cosmopolitan. To take one of Gobineau's more striking examples: he argues that the "Hindu race" has retained its integrity in spite of the long British occupation because India "keeps its soul erect and its thoughts

apart" from the English. The English, by contrast, because they are too malleable, "are themselves influenced in many ways by the local civilization, and cannot succeed in stamping their ideas" on their Indian subjects (68).[11] But eventually all civilizations will fall, in Gobineau's scenario; they will do so because of the constitutional weaknesses produced by the cosmopolitan instinct: "when the majority of citizens have mixed blood flowing in their veins, they erect into a universal and absolute truth what is only true for themselves, and feel it to be their duty to assert that all men are equal" (70). This belief in equality will lead to the final, pathetic "age of unity" (172) characterized by "mediocrity in all fields," where "[n]ations, or rather human herds . . . will thenceforth live benumbed in their nullity, like the buffalo grazing in the stagnant waters of the Pontine marshes" (173). Enervated human buffalo on the one side, Comtean homogeneity and "perfection" on the other: these are the imagined extremes of intercultural mixing in the age of modernity.

By the turn into the twentieth century, the challenges posed by cosmopolitanism to national cultures take on especial urgency in those countries where colonialism or other forms of capitalist expansionism have threatened to efface local aesthetics and undercut inherited traditions to the point where cosmopolitan assimilation (whether economic, social, religious, or aesthetic) is all but assured. This would be an "imperializing cosmopolitanism" (29), as Pheng Cheah calls it, against which "decolonizing nationalism" (28) pits itself. Cheah's detailed discussion of the fluctuating relations between different forms of nationalism and cosmopolitanism in Asia (including their mutually supportive roles in certain instantiations of socialism) is also relevant to many of the cultures of decolonization in the early twentieth century.[12] The increasingly testy critique by Irish nationalists of the literary revival of 1890–1922 (deemed by some to be a product of Anglo-Irish opportunism), for example, entailed a form of anti-cosmopolitanism operating alongside an ethnocentric particularism focused on religion and language as signs of national essence. Similarly, certain strands of the nationalist movement in Scotland viewed cosmopolitanism and British rule as coextensive entities. But within these and many other decolonizing movements, cosmopolitanism provided a liberatory set of ideals, if not practices, for those national subjects whom nationalism itself deemed deviant or unworthy of inclusion in the body politic.

A particularly compelling case in point is elaborated in Camilla Fojas's study of South American *fin de siécle* cosmopolitanisms, which offers a superb account of the entangled freedoms and constraints in what she calls "cosmopolitanism from the margins" (5). Although the concept of cosmopolitanism was, for many Latin Americans, merely a cipher for European decadence and self-regard, some self-described cosmopolitan writers and poets, mostly congregating in cities like Caracas and Buenos Aires, saw their own work as part of an experimental arena in which new national identities could take shape. Especially for queer *modernistas* trying to write their way out of the trifecta of invasive U.S. imperialism, decayed Spanish colonialism, and heteronormative nativism, cosmopolitanism offered a way of living in and through modern culture while remaining somewhat apart from its disciplinary structures. But, as Fojas shows, cosmopolitanism always performed



vastly different kinds of work for different demographics. To take one of her examples: the editors of *Cosmópolis: Revista Universal* brought out their journal in 1894 with the aim of creating a modern Venezuelan literature that would be in conversation not only with Venezuelan intellectuals, and not only with a Pan-American readership, but also implicitly with European cosmopolitan cultures in cities like Paris and Madrid. "We think that Venezuela needs periodicals of this kind," wrote one editor, "in order to show other countries that we have a youth that writes with ideas, trends, steeped in all types of literature, and with the full knowledge of all the recent developments in the arts and sciences" (105). But the cosmopolitan-nationalist aims of the journal were troubled in several respects. In the first place, most cosmopolitan efforts were viewed with suspicion by nativists who associated it with European dandyism (and therefore an imported effeminate homosexuality), and in spite of the *Cosmópolis* collective's deliberate discursive performance of a machismo nationalism, it was nevertheless stigmatized by the habitual critical conflation of cosmopolitanism and decadent femininity.[13] The irony here is that in its efforts to conform to the implicitly homophobic and sexist expectations of the new Venezuelan nationalism, *Cosmópolis* practiced seemingly uncosmopolitan forms of homophobia and misogyny. And at the same time (to deepen the irony and broaden the circle), the very idea of a Latin American cosmopolitanism was treated with "contemptuous racism" by some artistic players in Europe: Paul Bourget, for one, viewed non-European cosmopolitanism as "invalid and inorganic" (16) and very nearly an oxymoron; the only "true" cosmopolitan, according to Bourget, was the pure Frenchman. Nevertheless, as Fojas shows, the cosmopolitan cities of Latin America, and especially Buenos Aires, became something like cities of refuge for certain modernistas. There homosexual communities could form, women could act as their own agents, and the free exchange of new ideas and experimental aesthetics could flourish beyond the suffocating parochial constraints of traditional, conservative values.

By casting parochialism in the role of conservative gatekeeper, I don't mean to suggest that the vernacular values and inherited traditions typically associated with parochialism are immanently reactionary or categorically oppressive; indeed it is worth remembering in this regard that the synonymous words "parochialism" and "provincialism" were always terms used by centers of power (particularly British) to denote peripheries of diminished value and subordinate status. Thus the "parochial" is the parish located far from the institutional seat of religious power; "provincial" is the university that isn't Oxbridge; the colonies on the fringes are the "provinces." Nevertheless, the parochialism against which cosmopolitanism is often set entails in some cases a deadly form of coercion. Ifeome Kiddoe Nwankwo has demonstrated recently the degree to which parochialism was seamlessly articulated to all sorts of racialist agendas in the Americas. Nwankwo argues that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many writers of African descent deliberately identified themselves as citizens of the black world, a world accessible mainly through a literary cosmopolitan vision of connectedness across continents and national boundaries. From the perspective of this global blackness, the institutional power of U.S. slavery

depended particularly upon an enforced parochialism that endeavored to make the very idea of a black cosmopolitan world unthinkable to both blacks and whites. Charles L. Briggs, approaching race and cosmopolitanism from a different angle, points out that such an ideological parochialism may be wielded as a "purified" (90) vernacular—one that, because it contains no trace of its own historical complexity, may be opposed to a similarly purified or falsely simplified model of cosmopolitanism. He argues that W. E. B. Du Bois' lifelong cosmopolitan project was based in an understanding of racism as a kind of enforced provincialism that fostered "group imprisonment within a group," so that "the wider aspects of national life and human existence" were all but invisible to members of that racial group (91). To foster cosmopolitanism, on this reading, is to disrupt the centripetal forces of racism. And yet, to judge from James Weldon Johnson's powerful account of those forces in his anonymous novel, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912), cosmopolitanism is irrelevant to (or impotent in the face of) the racism that literally constitutes white America. Johnson's protagonist may float through Europe learning languages and cultivating international tastes, but when he returns home, it buys him nothing in the face of America's inhuman race violence. After watching a black man burned alive by a mob, the protagonist gives up on the idea of implementing a life of black cosmopolitanism in the United States and instead buries himself in a life of passing. If cosmopolitanism is understood as "a drive to define oneself in relation to the world beyond one's own" (Nwankwo 162) it must be said that the "world beyond" may, for many, become part of an infinitely receding horizon.

## Impossible Cosmopolitanism

"Literature," writes Sheldon Pollock in an essay on cosmopolitanism, "constitutes an especially sensitive gauge of sentiments of belonging"; unlike other forms of production and circulation, "the practices of literary culture . . . are practices of attachment" that "actualize modes of cosmopolitan and vernacular belonging" (118–19).[14] It seems important to add that it is precisely this power that also endows literary texts with the capacity to render with force the absence or failure of attachment, the sense of unbelonging, the disjunction between expectations for attachment on one hand and conditions of alienation on the other. Thus the parable of Johnson's novel brings us closer to the fragility of cosmopolitan community as it is imagined in, or conveyed through, a variety of modernist works. I said earlier that while modernist expressive culture rarely conveys a picture of achieved cosmopolitanism, it is almost always *about* cosmopolitanism—which is not to suggest that, in modernism's barely rendered world of early twentieth-century globalization and imperial crises, depictions of cosmopolitanism do not exist: of course they do, and with varying degrees of irony, self-reflexiveness, disdain, and cautionary qualifications.[15] But what seems



to me more significant than the overt staging of cosmopolitanism is the role that cosmopolitan fragility plays in the conditional sense of worldly engagement that permeates modernism (see, e.g., Berman; Lutz; Berman; Nava; Walkowitz). At the beginning of this essay, I suggested that it is possible to read cosmopolitanism as a normative ideal against which modernist aesthetics operate. Note that I am not claiming that "cosmopolitanism" equals "the good" in this formula, which would only serve to set up a litmus test according to which modernist works quite arbitrarily succeed or fail in some implied moral duty. Besides, plenty of modernists had reason to dislike or distrust received notions of cosmopolitanism. Rather, I mean that because of literature's ability to "actualize" different registers of belonging, received notions of cosmopolitanism become implicit objects of normative critique in many instances of literary modernism, and this critique acts to dislodge cosmopolitanism from its status as a universalism and to resettle it in the realm of the particular. The mode of cosmopolitanism varies from text to text, author to author, place to place, and certainly from decade to decade; but in the relationship I am describing, it serves to invoke intercultural forms of exchange that *could* be or *might* be or *shouldn't* be, over and against (or in keeping with) the text's account of "what is." Another way to put this is to say that a good deal of modernism—including that of the *modernistas*, and of James Weldon Johnson and Wallace Thurman, and of Mary Butts and Georg Simmel, and others to whom I will turn in a moment—may be understood as versions of what we are now calling "new" cosmopolitanism.

As I have suggested, *Quartet* offers an excellent example of the kind of negative critique described above. A version of interwar Parisian cosmopolitanism forms a backdrop for the lives depicted in the novel, focalized as they are through Marya Zelli's minimalist consciousness, which points insistently to the distributions of power that make "cosmopolitanism" a sovereign province of some, and impossible for others. The novel's plot is very nearly naturalist in its determinism: Marya's husband Stephan is arrested and imprisoned for fencing stolen art; the penniless Marya is taken in like a "homeless cat" (61) by an English art entrepreneur, Heidler, who, with his wife's cooperation, seduces her; Marya hears the "wheels of society clanking" during a crucial epiphany that "life is cruel and horrible to unprotected people" (51); the Heidlers tire of her and cast her out; she becomes addicted to Pernod and veronal; Stephan, shattered by his imprisonment, is released and deported from Paris; and on his way out of town he assaults Marya—perhaps fatally—when she tells him of her affair with Heidler. The end.

The naturalism underpinning Marya's downward spiral features the dark side of the City of Light. Bright boulevards and glittering crowds are contrasted to queues of silent women waiting to visit in the prison's "dark, dank corridor like the open mouth of a monster" (55). But it is through Marya's modernist focalization that the contrasts of Paris sharpen into critique: waiting with the women in the prison queue, she thinks about cosmopolitan Paris's "little arrangements, prisons and drains and things, tucked away where nobody can see" (55), all funneling away the city's dross, of which she and Stephan have become part. The novel's cityscape is peopled with immigrants from Hungary, refugees from Russia, expatriates from

England, tourists from America, people "of every nationality under the sun" (67), recalling to us Camilla Fojas's observation that big cities at this time had become "symbolic paradigms of radical inclusion, acceptance, and the coexistence and integration of difference" (14); but Marya's view of the city's transients penetrates to their individual ethnic vulnerabilities: as Stephan scrambles for the means by which to leave town, for example, he recalls a Jew he knows who might help him. "People abuse Jews," he says, "but sometimes they help you when nobody else will." "Yes," agrees Marya, "I think so, too. They often understand better than other people" (137). Jews certainly understand the conditions of alterity that subtend the performance of cosmopolitanism in the city. Paris may be a city of refuge in name, but woe to the rootless who come without money or filiation. Even the church offers no asylum to Marya: in a wicked parody of the traditional law of asylum, Marya visits St. Julien le Pauvre with Heidler one day, only to intuit, after viewing the impassive statue of "le pauvre," that the church and all the saints are on Heidler's side. "God's quite a pal of yours," she observes to Heidler. "Yes," he answers (96).

Paris throngs with postwar Bolsheviks and "internationals who invariably g[et] into trouble sooner or later," as the *patronne* of the Hotel L'univers muses (32). A newspaper gamely proclaims that "*Le mélange des races est à la base de l'évolution humaine vers le type parfait*" (33)—a dead-on Comtean prediction, but one with which the *patronne*'s husband, who has seen his share of internationals, wearily disagrees. The "mélange des races" in Paris is more like a scramble for survival, and Rhys stages that scramble against a warped cosmopolitanism ruled by the relentlessly British Heidlers. In this world, cosmopolitanism is just another name for a kind of social-sexual imperialism; intercultural contact is restricted to the art markets controlled by Heidler, and is structured by ludicrously transplanted "British" values. Thus the competing fictions of cosmopolitanism—the predatory version practiced within the English community in Paris, and the ideal, sanctuarial version that haunts the edges of Marya's consciousness—propel the novel through a negative dialectic that winnows Marya's existence down to bare life.

A similar, though inverted, tension structures Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*, the series of novelistic memoirs published together in 1939, which chronicles "Christopher Isherwood's" life in cosmopolitan Berlin in the months leading up to the fall of the Weimar Republic. The text's narrative device aims for objective detachment; the narrator asserts that he is nothing more than a camera aperture mechanically registering his daily life. What eventually emerges from the overlapping snapshot-chapters is a detached self-portrait of an English tutor whose nationality (British) and class (shabby-genteel) secure his entry into working-class and wealthy homes, into the company of Nazis and Jews, into cabarets and beer halls, and into pastoral outings and gay bars. Isherwood scrupulously details his encounters with cultural others, but whatever cosmopolitanism enables his mobility is surely one of convenience, insofar as the narrative studiously avoids any subjective (or subjunctive) account of the political catastrophe that swirls around Berlin. The funeral of Hermann Müller is just an "elegant funeral" (46) down in the street (and not the symbolic beginning of the Third Reich); the Nazi riots and disappearing Jews are barely inflected elements in a dispassionate composition. To call this a cosmopolitanism of convenience is not to censure the novelistic enterprise, however: the narrative tension between Christopher's apparent political agnosticism on one hand and the wreckage of history piling up around him like Benjamin's angel on the other creates, in the end, a ghostly portrait of what Berlin of 1931 is not: it is no longer a city of refuge, it is no longer a homosexual haven, it is no longer the glorious capital of international culture that it was before and immediately after the war. Its capacity for planetary cosmopolitanism shrinks with every page, until finally, in the last brief chapter, the political emerges (explicitly for once) as the inevitable infrastructure upon which all else is strung. Patriotism now subsumes all culture, and the newspapers contain nothing but "new rules, new punishments, and lists of people who have been 'kept in'" (203).[16]



The strain between revanchist, ethnic nationalism and cultural cosmopolitanism in the decades after the war, and especially in the 1930s, is written in the Pan-European history of the rise of totalitarianism. Before the war, the avant-gardist Herwarth Walden saluted Berlin as a city where "the Germans speak French, the Russians German, the Japanese a broken German, and the Italians English" (quoted in Mendes-Flohr 30). Berliner Georg Simmel's influential cosmopolitan theories of sociality depended upon the radically anti-positivist proposal that a society is "a structure which consists of *beings who stand inside and outside of it at the same time*" (14–15), which is to say that there is no such thing as a pure insider (or outsider) for Simmel. Rather, the social is by definition a Venn diagram of intersections, entailing a profound heterogeneity organized along the lines of mutual recognition and the social formations engendered, however transiently, thereby. Nationalism may be said to play a part in the formation of some social groups, but in the context of Simmel's prewar idea of the socius *as process*, nationalism is no more significant than, say, occupation or education or aesthetic preference, and none of those are as important as time and place. Simmel's own classrooms at the University of Berlin exemplified his understanding of the social as infinitely malleable and heterogeneous: at his encouragement (and, ultimately, at his peril), they were filled with women and immigrants or refugees from the east.[17] In 1915, Freud himself narrated the cosmopolitan assumptions of the prewar years in Europe: "Relying on [a] unity among the civilized peoples [of Europe], countless men and women have exchanged their native home for a foreign one, and made their existence dependent on the intercommunications between friendly nations. Moreover, anyone who was not by stress of circumstance confined to one spot could create for himself out of all the advantages and attractions of these civilized countries a new and wider fatherland, in which he could move about without hindrance or suspicion."[18]

But after the war, with the rise of irredentist nationalism, this vision of a Pan-European community—which Freud admits was always an "illusion" (Mendes-Flohr 25)—becomes increasingly untenable. Giorgio Agamben's description of a "lasting crisis following the devastation of Europe's geopolitical order [in the First World War]" centers on the fact that what had once been a "hidden difference (*scarto*) between birth and nation" (129) is now overt, palpable, and figured literally

in the postwar tidal wave of displaced and stateless refugees. In Agamben's argument, those immigrants and refugees belie the fiction of any purported identity between nativity and nationality, the latter of which can evidently be revoked or repudiated or restored with the stroke of a pen. This revelation puts into crisis, and simultaneously intensifies, that form of nationalism defined by originary appeals to "blood and soil." Moreover, for Agamben (and for Arendt before him), this "hidden difference between birth and nation" always threatens to reveal the fact that the "natural" rights ascribed to "man" since the French Revolution are in fact arbitrary designations assigned by sovereign nation-states to citizens; "man" is nothing more than "the immediately vanishing ground (who must never come to light as such) of the citizen" (128). Thus the geopolitical upheavals of the 1920s and 1930s in Europe and Asia, which cut cleanly through the links between birth and national identity, produced not only millions of refugees and stateless persons, but also a rash of laws discriminating between the "authentic life" of the citizen whose nativity and nationality could be said to be coterminous, on one hand, and the "life lacking every political value" of the noncitizen on the other (132). I would argue that in this context, the stakes of cosmopolitanism intensify exponentially.

Cosmopolitanism's fragility and the perils of postwar statelessness feature centrally in Kazuo Ishiguro's screenplay, *The White Countess*, where the retrospective restaging of the precariousness of the refuge city cannily takes its cue from modernism's attempts to imagine a new cosmopolitanism. Between the wars, Shanghai, a treaty port, was the only city of refuge in the world. Since entry could be gained without papers, it became an emergency destination for tens of thousands of stateless White Russians (whose citizenship had been cancelled) and tens of thousands of Jewish refugees (whose citizenship was always in doubt). Home to the huge extraterritorial International Settlement (comprised of British, Americans, Danes, Italians, New Zealanders, and others) and the separate but similarly extraterritorial French Concession, Shanghai was the site of what Marie-Claire Bérgère has called the golden age of the Chinese bourgeoisie, powered by a modern industrial business class and funded by the tariffs and traffic of the city's international shipping lanes. It was also a staging ground for the Chinese civil war begun in Shanghai in 1927 with Chiang Kai-shek's anti-communist purges—a war that was interrupted in 1937 by the commencement of the Second Sino-Japanese War, when Japan invaded Shanghai and bombed the city for ten days in August. In the decade leading up to the invasion, as Leo Ou-fan Lee has shown, there arose the "Shanghai Modern," a distinctly modern and yet legibly traditional set of aesthetics pervading the print cultures, literary cultures, and the energetic cabaret culture of the city.

*The White Countess*, set in 1936, wears the mantle of the Shanghai modern, but it is at bottom a meditation on cosmopolitanism—on its ephemerality, its artifice, its dependence upon detached sociability, and above all, its constitutive, if sometimes covert, relation to political flux. Ishiguro is well known for his interest in the forms and the work of cosmopolitanism, and especially for his fictional explorations of the tensions between cosmopolitanism and national particularism (in *An Artist of the Floating World*, for example); indeed, in *Cosmopolitan Style*, Rebecca Walkowitz argues at length that Ishiguro's novels comprise part of a "revival of modernist cosmopolitanism" (31). *The White Countess* stages several iterations of cosmopolitanism as it tells the story of a former U.S. diplomat (Mr. Jackson) who, having lost his family and his sight to terrorist bombings in the ongoing Kuomintang/communist struggle, retreats into the world of the Shanghai modern by opening what he calls "the bar of my dreams," where he meticulously controls all the elements for cosmopolitan sociability. Befriended by a mysterious Japanese businessman, Mr. Matsuda, Jackson rolls out his plans, hiring as his hostess a White Russian refugee, a countess who now scrapes out a living as a taxi dancer and lives with other White Russians in Shanghai's Jewish ghetto. She has "all the allure, the tragedy, the weariness" for the part of hostess, Jackson tells Matsuda; she is "perfect" because "history has no place for her kind anymore." When the nightclub (called The White Countess) opens a year later, it is a cosmopolitan success, with its clientele seemingly comprising all races, nationalities and sexualities; but Jackson is dissatisfied with what he calls the "pretty confection"; he wants political tension (though no violence, which would "destroy a perfectly blended mood in seconds"), so Matsuda arranges to bring in the "right number" of communists, Kuomintang soldiers, Japanese sailors and businessmen, thereby perfecting the club's insulated mood, which draws from yet exists beyond the politics of the streets. But of course, this cosmopolitan world disappears in a fireball when the Japanese invade on August 13. More than that: Matsuda turns out to be a menacing imperial nationalist who has helped to plan the invasion. The film ends as boatloads of fleeing refugees teeter out to sea, in search of the next port of refuge.

*The White Countess* sets up the nightclub as a kind of narrative prism through which the cosmopolitan desires of Matsuda and Jackson are refracted. Together those sets of desire "follow a narrative and conjure a world" (258) to use Anthony Appiah's phrase for what he sees as the imaginative action that binds people into cosmopolitan relations. The irony here is that while their intercultural friendship is genuine and their appreciation of compounded cultures is palpable, each abuses the ethics of cosmopolitanism in his own way. Matsuda the patriot tinkers with the nightclub like a science project, mixing the nuances of international tension in a kind of experimental counterpoint to his own uncomplicated imperial aspirations. For his part, Jackson uses cosmopolitanism's "perfectly blended mood" both as an antidote to his own personal tragedy, and as a formal, aesthetic rejoinder to the escalating hostilities in the city—hostilities that the film carefully chronicles in newspaper headlines that the blind Jackson cannot and does not wish to read. But, as Ishiguro suggests, the fact is that cosmopolitanism is always more than a style or a mood—or what Heidegger termed *Stimmung*. No matter how aesthetically rich or ethnologically complex, the cosmopolitan *Stimmung*, by virtue of its internationalism, is grounded in particular political relations, and politics will out.

In Jackson and Matsuda's careful staging of cosmopolitanism, nationalism is neither challenged nor espoused—it is merely contained, as a kinetic element in a composition. In fact, their nightclub is akin to a salon, where, in a controlled space, the hostess, the guests, the entertainment and the atmosphere all coalesce, for the

moment, into a miniature canvas upon which intersubjectivity and sociability are rendered. And as with the salon, The White Countess's cosmopolitanism operates as a kind of sanctuary—a conditional zone of what Michel de Certeau might call "local authority," that is, an "area of free play on a checkerboard that analyzes and classifies identity" (106). Indeed, Jackson and Matsuda refer to The White Countess as a canvas upon which they paint their respective visions. And it is this instrumental malleability—the ease with which cosmopolitanism may be used for personal or political ends—that seems to be at the heart of Ishiguro's meditation. Because of cosmopolitanism's purchase on and association with a philosophical universalism, efforts to formalize cosmopolitanism may be "blind" to all kinds of inconsistencies and contradictions in the realm of the particular. Conversely, because of cosmopolitanism's discursive dependence upon the individualized trope of aesthetic, expansive experience (in literature and other forms of expressive culture), efforts at constituting or reproducing "the cosmopolitan" as a compensation for or exemption from brute political exigencies may be blind to the actual demands of political justice or its absence. That is, *Stimmung* as a "perfectly blended" aesthetic mood isn't necessarily commensurate with the historical dimension of *Stimmung* as a collective (imperfectly blended) political affect. The tragic Countess Sofia may be a perfect hostess for the nightclub because her "kind" is historically obsolete, but the fact is that "out there" in the squalid ghetto, where she and her Jewish and Chinese neighbors adjust to and take care of each other, she is part of a more planetary form of cosmopolitanism, one that is unannounced and unaestheticized. This urgent form of cosmopolitanism is portable and episodic; and in the closing shots of the refugees' fragile boats at sea, Ishiguro suggests that it exists as a latent, and perhaps distinctly modernist, counterdiscourse of filiation in the interwar world of *homo sacer*.

## Modernism and the Cosmopolitan Situation

According to the art historian Partha Mitter, the interwar circulation of aesthetic modernist discourse through and between colonial cities and metropoles created what he calls a "virtual cosmopolis." In *The Triumph of Modernism: India's artists and the avant-garde, 1922–1947*, Mitter traces the rise of the various artistic strands comprising Indian modernism, beginning with the 1922 Bauhaus exhibit in Calcutta and the subsequent 1924 Bengali art show in Berlin. As the cosmopolitan center for the Bengali intelligentsia, Calcutta was part of this virtual cosmopolis—that is, the global "hybrid city of the imagination" where "the interactions between global and local were played out in the urban space of colonial culture, hosted by the intelligentsia who acted as a surrogate for the nation" (*Triumph* 11). Mitter argues that in



virtual cosmopolitanism, this imaginary amalgam of art and ideas emanating from and circulating (largely via print culture) through most major world cities—including Shanghai, Beirut, São Paulo, and Bombay—rendered artistic modernism into a remarkably flexible discourse which as a matter of course led to "different questions and different aims" ("Reflections" 29) in each of its local settings. One needn't have traveled from any of these locations to become part of cosmopolitan culture; "native[s] of the peripheries" could be "intellectually engaged with the knowledge system of the metropolis" in ways that did not in the least resemble mere "simple colonial power relations" ("Reflections" 38, 39). What's more, Mitter suggests, this virtual transmission of modernism cut it loose from all but the most general geographical origins, so that modernism offered itself as a deracinated, capacious discourse, available for all kinds of uses, including explicitly Indian uses within Indian artistic circles. The Bengali avant-garde cultivation of modernist primitivism, for example, issued in art that was at once visually experimental, implicitly critical of nationalist historicism, and explicitly opposed to nineteenth-century British academic models of "gross materialism" ("Reflections" 36). Even *within* the discourse of international modernism, Indian experiments with particular schools, such as Cubism (most famously by Gaganendranath Tagore, the Nobel poet Rabindranath Tagore's nephew), reframed it as an exploratory medium for Indian "mystery" rather than as an analytic method ("Triumph" 23).[19]

For his part, in these same years, Rabindranath Tagore elaborated a philosophical cosmopolitanism that was tied to global art on one end and Indian civilization on the other.[20] Tagore is considered by many to be a model of old-school cosmopolitanism, particularly for his emphasis on reason and for his fervent antinationalism, among other things. But in fact, as Saranindranath Tagore has recently argued, Tagore's "reason" is not the detached, impartial exercise associated with Enlightenment rationalism; rather, it is directed by a hermeneutic engagement with the world and its various traditions. This is a hermeneutics that depends upon an interpretive standpoint which "make[s] it possible for one tradition to converse with another," thereby widening each tradition through the "importing [of] elements into it from another" (1077). As Tagore himself wrote, "Whatever we understand and enjoy in human products instantly becomes ours, wherever they might have their origins."[21]

This cosmopolitan vision of art (in the broadest sense) as universally appreciable—given the right measure of understanding and enjoyment—is curiously incomplete. Human products from anywhere may be appreciated by "us," but can an "us" from *anywhere* fulfill the role of appreciator? Obviously this question can potentially be informed by the strategic assumptions of nineteenth-century colonial regimes propped up in no small part by the racialist evolutionary narratives exemplified by Gobineau (the answer would be a resounding "no"), but it also points in another direction, toward a foundational modernist critique of those assumptions, perhaps best exemplified by Wilhelm Worringer's remarkable dissertation in art history, *Abstraction and Empathy* [1908]. In his conclusion to this book about non-Western art, Worringer argues that Europeans must radically alter their heretofore

unexamined universalist positions as appraisers and appreciators of art if they are "to pass beyond a narrowly European outlook" (135) on world art. In essence, Worringer exposes in the discipline of art history and in western European culture more generally a deeply parochial, unreflexive stance, which takes local (European) aesthetic values (themselves relatively new and quite fungible) for universal laws of art. Only by striving to encounter non-European art on its own terms—an impossible exercise in cosmopolitan detachment, Worringer knows, but nevertheless a necessary ideal—can Europeans come to a crucial hermeneutical understanding of the nearly untranslatable role of *style* (as opposed to form or content) in all modes of art, including those sculptures and masks with which they have filled colonial museums like the Trocadéro, where Worringer's thesis begins.[22]

Versions of Worringer's cosmopolitan problematic appear with frequency in modernism's various treatments of national versus global belonging, since the discourses of modernism offer milieux in which cosmopolitanism modifies national identity and vice versa. "The Dead," for example, has generated a long and tangled critical debate about Joyce's cosmopolitanism, which is often couched in a zero-sum relation to nationalism. On the one side, it is said that the story displays Joyce's rejection of Irish popular nationalism (which, in the story, amounts to a form of parochialism) and points the way toward his embrace of a cosmopolitan existence elsewhere—cosmopolitanism being the condition of possibility for his modernism; on the other side, it has been argued that the story in fact aligns modernism with cultural nationalism, both of which act as buffers against the atomizing forces of modernity, including, in this formulation, cosmopolitanism (see Robbins, "The Newspapers Were Right"). And indeed one could easily argue for a third kind of related reading that addresses the story's sustained focus on hospitality—which, as we have seen, is both a linchpin of Kant's planetary cosmopolitanism and is, according to Derrida, "culture itself" (16). The story is structured around the nouns and verbs of hospitality: entering, leave-taking, singing, conversing, with articles of food and drink fastidiously catalogued as though they were the objective correlatives of the story's frequent invocations of hospitality. This is not just any hospitality, of course; it's "Irish hospitality," and because it is explicitly tied to national character, its putative ambit is extra-national (since "Irish hospitality" makes no sense except in an implicitly comparativist context). But the story's major breach of this hospitality occurs when Miss Ivors, the nationalist, leaves abruptly before dinner, after accusing Gabriel of being a "West Briton" and hearing him reply that he is "sick of his own country" (189). If there is a fleeting "imagined community" in the story, it takes ironic shape in the dinner conversations about the singers of Europe and the irrationality of the Catholic Church. That is, it is sustained neither by Miss Ivors' constricted claims to authentic particularism, nor by Gabriel's weak conception of worldliness, but rather by an "Irish hospitality" which, if it ever existed, is fast becoming an instrumental fiction in the decolonizing visions of both Gabriel and Molly Ivors.

The English modernist Mary Butts explores the interface between cosmopolitanism and nationalism in a way that is nearly opposite to Joyce in "The Dead." Her



stories, written mostly in Paris in those decades of displacement, the late 1920s and 1930s, elaborate subtle but abiding distinctions between nationalism and what might be thought of as an aestheticized patriotism; time and again, this latter quality helps to maintain equilibrium within the small (often homosexual) groups that gather together in cosmopolitan settings. In the story "Scylla and Charybdis" (the very title of which marks this precarious equilibrium), a female narrator reports the bohemian lives of her "own family group" (36) of four gay male friends in Paris—three Englishmen and one Russian refugee. The homeless Russian is impetuous and manipulative, but the group supports him and adores him, agreeing that "penniless russian boys are to be forgiven much" (33). When another Englishman, Crane, joins them in Paris on his way home from his work as an imperial administrator in the Middle East, the group's equilibrium unravels almost immediately. It is not just a question of numbers: Crane possesses an aura of Britishness that conflicts harshly with the aestheticized sociability of the English Parisians. He is no brute—in fact, he is in good measure a sensitive and self-reflexive man—but his sense of national character is tied inextricably to an imperial form of paternalistic masculinity, and that is a trait that can never be mixed into the group's cosmopolitan sociability.

Similarly, in "In Bloomsbury," the story for which Butts is probably best known, competing performances of Englishness and cosmopolitanism drive the plot: on the one side, a set of indulged postwar siblings imagine that they are cosmopolitans because they go back and forth to Paris and languidly talk in the lexicon of art; on the other side, their heretofore unknown cousins, South African colonials, imagine they can easily repatriate to England after murdering their black half brother. Both of these versions of worldliness are patently false: neither imperial domination nor Parisian dilettantism count as cosmopolitanism. And both versions of Englishness are just as suspect, since both depend upon unexamined assumptions of British entitlement that have nothing to do with vernacular English identity. And that identity, the story also suggests, is crucially rooted in history—specifically in England before the war (an "occurrence" that is "politely ignored" [39] by the siblings), and more generally, one may surmise from the body of Butts's work, in an imagined premodern England.

It is of course a truism that much British modernism grounds its critique of modernity in an implied, fantastic antediluvian England, and this grounding helps to support a nostalgic conservatism that cancels out the political core of liberal democracy. From this perspective, Butts, with her narrative reliance on an almost ghostly English historical essence, is even more conservative than most. But her work is instructive for the distinctions she makes between nationalism and a more ethereal patriotic *feeling*—an affect or mood, or, to return to Heidegger's term, *Stimmung*—and for the way she triangulates these with cosmopolitanism, which, in her hands, helps to sharpen the distinction. This configuration is perhaps most dramatically rendered in "From Altar to Chimney Piece," a story about an Englishman named Vincent, who lives most of the time in Paris, having been badly traumatized in the Great War and worrying that he will never regain a sense of wholeness. Paris's ancient balms are now leeching away into the frenetic postwar Americanization of

the city. England itself offers little succor for Vincent; for "like many men of profound patriotism, he liked less and less the way England was going" (238). Vincent falls in love with an American ingénue who, he comes to realize, has been corrupted by an evil cabal of experimentalists headquartered at (of all places) a thinly veiled version of Gertrude Stein's salon. As this plot point suggests, the story verges on the histrionic, but what is genuinely interesting is the narrative layering of the relations among national character, patriotism, and history. Vincent's patriotism—his sense of "Englishness" as an affective aesthetic of intelligent service and humility—contrasts sharply with the "unprincipled" young Americans who are taking over Paris, leading the narrator to imagine that "in America, it would seem that a cheap and strident idealism often takes the place of true discipline, the love of country or of mankind" (247). American national identity, in other words, is so affectively superficial as to be devoid of the capacity either for patriotism or for genuine cosmopolitan feeling.

The bigger crime here is that, like the English siblings of "In Bloomsbury," the Americans in Paris—and presumably American national character itself—lack a sense of history; this vacuum makes cosmopolitan thinking impossible. Americans speak "as though nothing had ever happened before they happened," and they write "as though man had never put pen to paper before" ("Altar" 247). The story's insistence on the importance of historical consciousness within cosmopolitanism (putting aside Butts's solemnly conservative view of "history") returns us to some central questions about cosmo-modernism—questions that will, I hope, help to reframe cosmopolitanism as a textual heuristic device for making sense of twentieth-century modernity.

First, what is the value—and for that matter the feasibility—of a detached cosmopolitan "view from nowhere" as it becomes the trope for a fulfilled or failed normative ideal of mutuality in modernist works? The answer to this will of course vary widely, from the humanitarian heroism of Tagore's character Nikhil, who believes (with echoes of Comte and in contrast to his nationalist nemesis) that "man's history has to be built by the united effort of all the races in the world," to the cluelessness of Ford Madox Ford's American character John Dowell, who carries wampum in his pocket as he plods between European leisure spaces in a deluded domestic trance, to the worldly writer in Langston Hughes's "Luani of the Jungle," who becomes a victim of his own cosmopolitan passion, to Felix Volkbein, *Nightwood*'s lonely, rootless "wandering Jew," whose historical consciousness dwells in the fantasy of ancestral nobility, but whose fate is tied to an offstage regime of blood and soil.[23]

Second, how does the aesthetic stance of cosmopolitanism bear up under the interwar pressures of nationalism and imperialism? What can we learn about its contingency from an artist like Josephine Baker, for example, whose successful public persona in Europe in the late 1920s and 1930s depended upon the entwinement of these three things—that is, the putative pluralism of cosmopolitan appreciation, the nationalist myth of French racial tolerance, and European imperialist assumptions about the isomorphism of colonial others (which made it apparently unremarkable for Baker to be at once Polynesian, Algerian, West African, and



African American)?[24] Or, to pose the question more philosophically, how does the cosmopolitan aesthetic help to mediate modernity's paradoxical claims to be at once unprecedented and at the same time breaking with a preexisting fabric (national, racial, historical)—how does it, that is, participate in what Fredric Jameson, following Sartre, calls the "situation" of modernity, the narrative structure that holds together modernity's "contradictory features of belonging and innovation" (57)? Aesthetic cosmopolitanism may be (and I believe it is) a key element in this representational sleight-of-hand, allowing modernism at once to make it new and to make it not entirely new. If this is so, then how well does cosmopolitanism work as a descriptor of the cultural products arising from James Clifford's "discrepant cosmopolitanisms"? There is no reason to believe that the frictional forces at work between cultures in a global economy would reproduce modern "newness" as a desideratum wherever those forces may be found—in India, Algeria, Papeete, or Nova Scotia.

Finally, is it possible for the explicit aims of planetary cosmopolitanism to persist within the self-reflexive irony—not to say cynicism—of modernist style? What *is* so funny about peace, love, and understanding, and how can they survive the wrecking ball of modernism, except in the breach? Moreover, what can a cosmopolitan refraction of historical consciousness—in Butts, Woolf, Cavafy, or Du Bois, for example—teach us about the limits of what Robbins calls "temporal cosmopolitanism"? ("The Newspapers Were Right" 109–112). That is, if any cosmopolitanism worthy of the name must have an anchor in materialist (and especially colonial) history, how long or short must the anchor-line be? Too long, and historical trauma becomes the bedrock of aesthetic valuation; too short, and the past sins of colonialism may be forgotten for the price of a new market. C. P. Cavafy's famously cynical question at the end of "Waiting for the Barbarians" (1904) nicely concentrates the dilemma through the long lens of history, setting it in antiquity but inflecting it with the assurances of modernity: "And now what shall become of us without any barbarians?"(19). One answer is: "we" shall become nationalists; another is: we will be cosmopolitans. A third, coming neither from metropole nor periphery but from the camps of the stateless, is under translation.

## NOTES

1. Originally published in the UK as *Postures* (1928), and in the United States in 1929 as *Quartet*. Many thanks to the Penn State graduate students in my 2005 seminar, "Cosmo-modernism," and especially Amy Clukey, Liz Kuhn, and Shawna Ross for their unstinting participation in many of the questions addressed here.

2. Like its Greek precursor, Roman Stoic cosmopolitanism develops in a context of expanding and contracting empires, ever-shifting geographical boundaries, and competing claims for political belonging. Early Christianity transforms this model of competing ties into one that opposes local life (i.e., on our earthly polis) to a heaven-and-earthly sphere of

God's faithful. See Fine and Cohen, 137–39; Nussbaum, "Kant and Cosmopolitanism," 27–57. Theorist and Victorian scholar Amanda Anderson offers a very specific account of cosmopolitan "detachment," which, far from being a "view from nowhere" is, she argues, "self-consciously informed by a postconventional and ongoing interrogation of cultural norms and systems of power" (30). Anderson lists three key components of nineteenth-century cosmopolitanism: "reflective distance from one's original or primary cultural affiliations, a broad understanding of other cultures and customs, and a belief in universal humanity" (63).

3. These surges of interest in cosmopolitan theory recur almost unfailingly during historical moments of rapid global change, when the reach of modernity outstrips its assimilative mechanisms.

4. Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose" [1784], "Seventh Proposition," 49 (hereafter cited parenthetically as "Universal History"). "Cosmopolitan condition" is the name Kant gives to the necessary and ongoing negotiation of a tension, intrinsic to man, between the desire for unrestricted freedom and the need for security through cooperation.

5. Kleingeld points out that Kant's is only one of several models for cosmopolitanism in circulation at the time; see 505–24.

6. For an excellent account of the strengths and shortcomings of the Habermasean cosmopolitan project, see Cheah, 45–79.

7. Robbins discusses the implications of Clifford's about-face in "Comparative Cosmopolitanisms," 253–62. Brennan offers a bracing critique of not only Clifford's but virtually all formulations of cosmopolitanism, whether new or old. In essence, he argues that the very concept marks an uneven playing field, which, *a priori*, awards hermeneutic power to the formulator.

8. See, for example, Hegel and Stirner; see also Marx's scathing critique of Stirner's developmental narrative, esp. 143–208.

9. In his ongoing critique of Comte, Adorno points out that the scientific ideals of "rational transparency" and "strictly observable facts" proposed by Comte for use in the development of a "science of society" couldn't really work, given that human subjects are (obviously) the creatures doing the observing (9–10; see also lectures 1–4).

10. The laudable "influence of civilization," Marx writes, will "subordinate the satisfaction of the personal instincts to the habitual exercise of the social faculties, [and] subject, at the same time, all our passions to rules imposed by an ever-strengthening intelligences, with the view of identifying the individual more and more with the species" (280–81). Thence modernism's discontents.

11. Gobineau continues with an interesting prophecy (the year is 1851): "The Hindu race has become a stranger to the race that governs it today, and its civilization does not obey the law that gives the battle to the strong. . . . A moment will come . . . when India will again live publicly, as she already does privately, under her own laws" (68).

12. Cheah argues that, prior to the nation's "annexation of the territorial state"—the nation, still more or less existing as an imagined conglomerate, as Ireland between 1916 and 1922, for example, or Italy before 1860, or Germany before 1808—"nationalism is not antithetical to cosmopolitanism" (25).

13. See Fojas's comparative discussion of the contemporaneous journals *Ariel* and *Cosmópolis*, and their diverse treatments not only of the genderized affect of cosmopolitanism, but also of nationalism and cosmopolitanism, 104–30. See also Bulson in this volume for an elaboration of the tension, inherent in modernist little magazines, between local conditions of production and putative global audiences.



14. Though Pollock is concerned mainly with the comparative uses of cosmopolitanism and vernacularism in the second millennium in South Asia and western Europe, he closes with a compelling discussion of Gramsci's attempts to come to terms with the (national) vernacular/(universal) cosmopolitan problematic, following it ultimately to the recognition that "the new must be made precisely through attachment to the past, and . . . that only such attachment enables one to grasp what can and must be changed" (46). This is a proposal to which I will return presently.

15. In the high modern Anglo-American canon, examples would include *The Good Soldier* (and especially that instrument of capitalism, Leonora Ashburnham), Katherine Mansfield's "*Je ne parle pas français*" (the predatory Raoul Duquette), *The Ambassadors* (Strether, enlightened), *Ulysses* (Bloom, innocent), and *Pilgrimage*, which, Kusch argues, displays the entrenched imperialism (i.e., the mendacity) of British modern cosmopolitanism—though of course I would wish to qualify that claim.

16. In *Christopher and His Kind* [1976], Isherwood fills in many of the narrative aporias of *Goodbye to Berlin.*

17. Simmel wasn't appointed professor until a few years before his death, thanks in part to the institutional anti-cosmopolitanism reflected in this official letter opposing his promotion: "His academic audience sits together. The ladies constitute what is, even for Berlin, a strong contingent. The remaining are students from the oriental world who have become residents, and those who stream in from eastern countries are extremely well represented. His entire manner corresponds with their tastes and leads in their direction." Quoted in Leck, 37.

18. Quoted in Mendes-Flohr, 24. Mendes-Flohr offers a compelling discussion of the imbrications of Jewish *bildung* and modern cosmopolitanism in Berlin before World War I.

19. For a homologous consideration of "imported" Euromodernisms (particularly in the form of poetry) and postcolonial Caribbean writers, see Ramazani 449: "In redeploying modernism . . . [postcolonial poets] have reshaped it through indigenous genres and vocabularies, have recentered it in non-Western landscapes and mythologies, and have often inverted its racial and cultural politics." See also Kalliney, in this volume.

20. Tagore's close associations with Yeats and Kandinsky, for example, are well known.

21. Quoted in S. Tagore, 1078. R. Tagore's emphasis on enjoyment within this elaboration of a situated cosmopolitanism—appreciating other cultures while remaining connected and in some sense beholden to the inherited bonds of one's own—is akin to what Appiah, in his last two books, has called "rooted cosmopolitanism." According to Robbins, Appiah's is a precarious kind of cosmopolitanism, because in its efforts to reconcile patriotism and cosmopolitanism it leaves out any game plan for reckoning with the worst excesses of the nation. That is, Robbins perceives in Appiah's "partial" cosmopolitanism (Appiah's phrase) an implicit communitarian hierarchy of attachments that works from the local (in the form of received tradition) to the national (in the form of a more abstract "imagined community") to the global. On Robbins's reading, this unexamined or unaccounted feature appears in many of the "new" cosmopolitanisms, rooted or otherwise: such an *a priori* ordering of allegiances renders them ill-equipped to do the work of normative, planetary cosmopolitanism. See Robbins, "Cosmopolitanism: New and Newer," passim.

22. For style as the linchpin of cosmopolitan modernism, see Walkowitz.

23. *The Home and the World*, 165–66; Ford, *The Good Soldier*; Hughes, "Luani of the Jungles" [1928]; Barnes, *Nightwood* [1936].

24. See Lyon, 29–47, for a discussion of Baker's cosmopolitanism.

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## CHAPTER 17

# JEAN RHYS: LEFT BANK MODERNIST AS POSTCOLONIAL INTELLECTUAL

PETER KALLINEY

In the early 1960s, when Jean Rhys was trying to launch a comeback after decades of silence, she published "The Day They Burned the Books" in *London Magazine*. It is narrated by a white woman from the Caribbean. The story looks back on a childhood friendship with a light-skinned "colored" boy who has an English father and a mulatto mother. The boy's profligate father has little standing among the island's white community. Aside from marrying outside his race, "[h]e was not a planter or a doctor or a lawyer or a banker. He didn't keep a store. He wasn't a schoolmaster or a government official. He wasn't—that was the point—a gentleman" (*Tigers* 40). On top of that, he beats his wife and drinks. His one redeeming feature is his impressive library, from which his son, Eddie, and the narrator like to borrow books. Eddie's strange family and voracious reading have led him to some iconoclastic conclusions about "home," meaning England. While all the other white (or nearly white) children wax about the glories of London, the fog, the strawberries and cream, and the daffodils, Eddie would sit quietly. Of course, none of them had ever been to London, or eaten strawberries, or seen daffodils. On one occasion, Eddie blurts out that he doesn't like strawberries and doesn't care for daffodils either. His audience is shocked into silence, but the narrator secretly admires him, claiming "I for one was tired of learning and reciting poems in praise of daffodils, and my relations with the few 'real'