



# Introduction to “Re-Mapping Cosmopolitanism”

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Debates about the concept of cosmopolitanism have flared up repeatedly in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, not so much as a set or coherent theory, but rather as an alternative model of thinking in opposition to excessive nationalist ideologies; or, more recently, as an intervention into hegemonic global strategies. Today there are multiple understandings of what cosmopolitanism means and how it functions as a worldview, an ideology or a practice of survival. While these varied definitions often share some characteristics, they can also be deeply contradictory in others, but each conception is ultimately rooted in the meaning of the term in the original ancient Greek: “citizen of the cosmos”. Basic to a classic understanding of cosmopolitanism is the idea of transcending local allegiances by choosing to participate in a broader and more universal culture.

The conceptual presence of “citizen of the cosmos” has been in operation in the West since the fourth century B.C., and from that time it has continually found its way into the political, social, cultural, philosophical, and artistic discourse of first western (European) and then world traditions and cultures. While perhaps most obviously conjoined with the project of empire, cosmopolitanism is also tied to the effects of travel and migration, of a mobile citizenship that can be both desirable and forced. In particular, since the late nineteenth century, cosmopolitanism has been a crucial element of modernity, connected to various attempts at internationalism, not only in politics but also importantly in modernist art—literature, theater, music, dance, painting, and film—which deliberately reached beyond national boundaries. Modernist and avant-garde writers were often ex-pats and world travelers who intentionally developed a cosmopolitan perspective in their aesthetics and narratives. The early twentieth century also saw the important development of cinema, which gave cosmopolitanism a new edge: movies disseminated concepts and fashions to different parts of the world, building a global discourse and iconography while maintaining individual variations. After WWII, cosmopolitanism continued as a conceptual paradigm, exemplified by the destabilizing of national identities with various attempts to create transnational networks and connections that reflected a desire for both a broader European identity and more comprehensive international alliances.

While cosmopolitanism has at times been critiqued for spreading particular (western) hegemonies, as the twentieth century progressed, it was complicated by the new and more inclusive views of postmodern writers and filmmakers. Cosmopolitanism has thus been increasingly re-conceptualized in recent decades, heavily informed by post-colonial and environmental theories, and has been aptly named *new* cosmopolitanism. This process of analysis and reassessment has led to an expansion of understanding and a rich new tradition of critical approaches exemplified by theorists like Kwame Anthony Appiah, Pheng Cheah, Ulrich Beck, Bruce Robbins, and Rebecca Walkowitz, but also by postcolonial environmental critics from Homi Bhaba to Aarthi Vadde. Such work has proven to be timely: in the past two years cosmopolitanism has resurged as a crucial concept ripe for further examination. The neo-nationalist assertions arising out of the isolationist tendencies in Brexit and of the Trump presidency have called into question the values inherent in a cosmopolitanism rooted in humanist traditions. When Trump announced soon after his election that there was “no certificate of global citizenship” but only “America first”, he brought back into focus a dichotomy between

national and international world views that has structured discourses about cosmopolitanism since the beginning.

The challenge of cosmopolitanism does not reside only in political assertions, however. It can be found in a variety of forms—narrative, aesthetic, and cultural—that continue to shape and inform our experiences as citizens navigating a complex and interconnected world. This special issue re-maps cosmopolitanism by assembling scholarship that reevaluates and redefines the value of cosmopolitanism as expressed in a variety of texts. Whether rethinking traditional conceptions of cosmopolitanism or locating the presence of post-human transformations, the articles in this issue articulate new cosmopolitanisms that are committed to locating strategies of resistance to the negative globalizing and homogenizing tendencies of traditional cosmopolitanism. These include alternate scales (the city rather than the nation); alternate spaces (the backstage musical and the airport as transnational hub); alternate texts (parodies and adaptations); and alternate communities (interspecies alliances). They also include detailed examinations of the literary and filmic techniques—including meta frames, parody, dissensus, narrative displacement, and cultural inversion—that generate a more reflexive cosmopolitanism.

*New* cosmopolitanism in this issue thus figures as a collective term for the critical questioning of traditional humanist concepts of cosmopolitanism, as they emerged from the largely idealist nineteenth-century debates about national identity and universal humanity. Cosmopolitanism was then offered as a positive value by Liberal writers and politicians, stressing the cultural connectedness of (western) European countries. But for conservative thinkers and politicians (such as Benjamin Disraeli) it also signaled an unhealthy preoccupation with foreign cultures or even a lack of patriotism around the time of World War I. In the 1890s, as Mary Christian shows in this issue, the responses to Ibsen's play, *A Doll's House*, which tried either to Anglicize or displace at an exotic distance the foreignness of the Norwegian setting, actually reflect a much larger debate in the search for national British identity at a time when other nations were contesting British imperial leadership.

This first article in this volume reminds us that the contested concept of cosmopolitanism has—over time—been claimed and revalidated by liberal and conservative thinkers alike. In this context, it is interesting that Bernard Shaw's creative response to Ibsen's play, "Still After the Doll House" (1890), presents the sameness and universality of suburban (bourgeois) settings as a trait common to Ibsen's Norway and to England in the late nineteenth century. Shaw believed that "modernity with its easy exchange of people, things and ideas" galvanized the differences between nations and cultures, but "widened the possibility of an international culture ... that would be equally relevant for audiences in many nations" (p. 8).

While universality was considered a positive value in the debates during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, critics in the twenty-first century have repeatedly challenged these values as hegemonial western concepts. A great number of recent critics, especially those rooted in postcolonial or Marxist theories, have exposed cosmopolitanism's tenacious adherence to western hierarchies and colonial ideologies. In their resistance to globalization, these critics have generated new models that oppose and redefine the western imperialist heritage, which, among other things, has muted differences in cultures, geographies, and individual voices. In other words, expressions of the local and the particular are disappearing in a universalizing discourse that organizes the world in large globalist (capitalist) units. This kind of anti-global resistance drives several contributions in this issue, most significantly Liam Kruger's "The Civic Scale: Strategies of Emplacement in Dambudzo Marechera and Ivan Vladislavić". Kruger rejects amalgamations on national, transnational, or world-scales, offering as an alternative the community of individual attachments to smaller spaces, such as cities. Kelley Talliou and Florian Zitzelsberger, on the other hand, look to artistic forms in international films to discover in their techniques of mis-en-abyme, meta frames, or cultural inversion, a potential for what we may call "reflexive cosmopolitanism".

Finally, another spatially oriented, but very different approach to new cosmopolitan thinking is offered by Sara Press in "Terrestrial Cosmopolitanism, Posthumanism, and Multispecies Modes

of Being in *Cereus Blooms at Night*", showing that the interspecies alliances in Shani Mootoo's novel replace anthropocentric hierarchies with ecological collectivities that reveal the underrepresentation of humanism's other. In the end, she suggests a third space of subjectivity in a biotope that blurs the boundaries of humans and nonhumans.

Mary Christian's essay, "'A Doll's House Conquered Europe': Ibsen, his English Parodists, and the Debate over World Drama", reminds us of the ways in which nineteenth-century cosmopolitan or international views were constructed: cosmopolitanism then basically referred to cultural and maybe political commonalities between (western) European countries. From a twenty-first-century view, we may be surprised at the limited scope of nineteenth-century British writers and audiences who looked at Ibsen's Norway as an exotic or even backwards country. Its foreignness, as it appeared in *A Doll's House* and in other plays by Ibsen, was either met with disdain and rejection or was translated (literally and symbolically) into a British social context, which made its cultural difference disappear. Christian uses a number of parodies, adaptations, and other forms of creative commentary on *A Doll's House* to show the different ways foreign texts and ideas entered and were translated in the British public sphere. The essay shows that "artistic cosmopolitanism" became the place for a discussion of both the need for an English dramatic tradition and (by extension) a national debate on national identity.

Christian groups the varying responses to *A Doll's House* in three different categories: those which assimilate the play's setting, characters, and values into normative Englishness; those that keep the Norwegian setting and depict it as ordinary and familiar; and finally, those that exaggerate the exoticism of the foreign setting, alluding to its dangers to Englishness. What makes this contribution especially relevant for a more decentered approach to cosmopolitanism is the fact that Christian does not just look at the way major literary texts radiated their influence, but instead, adopts the concept of a "multipolar literary influence" (Damrosch) to show that the many spin-offs of Ibsen's play reached an even broader public than the play itself. She uses the parodies and adaptations of *A Doll's House* from the late nineteenth century to provide insight into larger national debates about the tensions between national and cosmopolitan standpoints and into the ways writers and audiences saw themselves.

Kelley Talliou discusses the 2017 film, *Tripoli Cancelled* by Naeem Mohaiemen that was shown at the documenta 14 in Athens, Greece. The paper suggests an interesting new approach to cosmopolitanism, which puts twentieth- and twenty-first century concepts in a dialogue with those from classical Greek antiquity—a choice that offers itself because of the focus on Athens as a "vantage point" in *Tripoli Cancelled*. Talliou briefly discusses a variety of recent cosmopolitan theories, but mainly focuses on a combination of Ulrich Beck's "cosmopolitan realism", (*Cosmopolitan Visions*, 2006), Kwame Anthony Appiah's "rooted cosmopolitanism" (*Cosmopolitanism*, 2006), and Svetlana Boym's notion of "reflective nostalgia" (*The Future of Nostalgia*, 2001) to investigate the film's layered narrative of displacement which eventually connects the reader with a new vantage point for contemporary migration. Talliou's cosmopolitan model has been inspired by the film's setting of the abandoned Elliniko Airport in Athens. The film portrays an anonymous protagonist—lonely and exiled—who has been living for a decade in the decaying airport, which exists at a strategic point between the past and the future, a kind of timeless present that conflates ancient Greek cosmopolitanism and modern Greece as a major thoroughfare for contemporary "desperate migration". *Tripoli Cancelled*, with its poetic suspension between past and present, the local and the global, and its nostalgic images of migration and forms of hospitality, epitomizes what Talliou calls a "compelling model of cosmopolitan world making".

Florian Zitzelsberger, in his essay "The American Film Musical and the Place(less)ness of Entertainment: *Cabaret's* 'International Sensation' and American Identity in Crisis" identifies a cosmopolitan alternative to an essentialized and homogenous Americanness (and nationalism in general) in the formal and narrative possibilities of the backstage film musical. In setting up this potential, he begins with an overview of the film musical and the various theoretical approaches that have shaped our understanding of how it functions as a genre in relation to its social contexts. While the film musical is a very typical and popular American genre, it remains under-theorized, and Zitzelsberger makes interesting in-roads into how it not only reflects the social world it emerges

from, but also complicates and critiques it through narrative, performance and syntax. He notes that the film musical embodies a certain Americanness, not only in its narrative tropes—such as the rags to riches story and the American Dream—but it also connotes American identity through its focus on performance and the world of entertainment. This particularly manifests in the dual registers of the backstage musical which positions the performative world of the stage against its more realistic backstage world. He contends that in film musicals the staged world is most often a specifically American one, and that the dichotomous chronotopes (a Bakhtinian concept) of the backstage musical allow for contrasts with spaces that are non-American. In this way, cosmopolitanism resides in the backstage musical's ability to contrast a hegemonic Americanness with non-American perspectives, creating a space for a cosmopolitan hybridity.

To illustrate this point, Zitzelsberger focuses on a close reading of Bob Fosse's *Cabaret* (1972). Set in 1931 Berlin, the film features American performer Sally Bowles as an "international sensation" who unites and transgresses the dual registers and spaces of the musical. *Cabaret* also engages in metalepsis, connecting with yet another chronotope—that of the audience. The ensuing *mise en abyme* and inconsistencies promote a crisis of identity and a rejection of stable borders. Thus, rather than shoring up or mythologizing American identity, as the film musical is traditionally understood to do, *Cabaret* critiques it, laying bare in particular the bankruptcy of its heteronormativity—both as an entertainment structure and a cultural norm. That it does so in the context of growing fascism in Germany makes the film an especially potent critique of social and racial restrictions in American society. Finally, Zitzelsberger's reading of *Cabaret* suggests that the backstage musical genre, with its self-reflexivity and semantic and narrative incongruities, can provide a valuable cosmopolitan perspective in cinematic representation.

Liam Kruger's essay examines cosmopolitanism as a space of *dissensus* between the local and the global. Adopting this concept from political philosopher Jacques Rancière, he clarifies *dissensus* as a productive conflict that allows for continual discussion and disagreement to exist in an ongoing negotiation. He argues that the city—the civic scale—is the place in which to examine dissensus because modern cities require citizens to navigate continually between national ideals and the realities of daily human interactions, between cosmos and polis. Thus, looking at city literature becomes a necessary antidote to reductive ideas of national representation; the urban landscape is more representative and particular than the imagined community of the nation, yet sizable enough to be significant.

"The Civic Scale: Strategies of Emplacement in Dambudzo Marechera and Ivan Vladislavić" focuses on the work of two writers—Marechera and Vladislavić—in two cities of the postcolonial era: Harare and Johannesburg. Kruger writes first of Marechera, whose short essay, *Fear and Loathing out of Harare* (1985) as well as his novel, *The House of Hunger* (1978) exemplify a complex dissensus of both space and time. Marechera, who self-identified as a writer of no specific race and was critiqued for having a "decadent" European manner, is clearly a cosmopolite in effect and affiliation. His attachment is not to the grander ideas of a newly (re)imagined nation, with a mythologized past and idealized future, but to the reality of the present moment, grim as that may often be. His vision of Harare is a fond critique—an incongruous disavowal and attachment—what Kruger calls a "civic, sensible encounter" of dissensus between hopeful visions and harsh realities. As such it provides a model for Kruger's mapping of modernity in the postcolony, with its flattening out and expansion vis-à-vis Benjamin's reading of modernity in Baudelaire, and his insistence on the inclusion of both township and city as complementary and dependent parts of a whole.

Vladislavić's *Portrait with Keys: Joburg and What-What* (2006) provides a more contemporary example of city literature as well as a contrasting authorial identity; yet despite obvious differences, the two writers share a resistance to being read as representative of a national literature. Vladislavić embraces the incongruities of postcolonial city life in his descriptions of an "*unheimlich* dwelling" occasioned by the tension and violence between haves and have-nots. Kruger also identifies, despite this, the affective attachments of home: a love of place that exists despite critiques and comparisons, which calls to mind Appiah's "rooted cosmopolitanism." At the same time, he keenly recognizes both

writers' ambivalence of the present moment and their elegiac tone as to what the future might bring: what if such spaces are submerged, and silenced?

In "Terrestrial Cosmopolitanism, Posthumanism, and Multispecies Modes of Being in *Cereus Blooms at Night*", Sara Press challenges the classic conception of cosmopolitanism as a single human community of citizens, which, as the product of colonial and hierarchical discourses, excludes humanism's "underrepresented others." Based on the assumption of human exceptionalism, humanist cosmopolitanism places humans over nonhuman organisms, and, most significantly, designates certain communities as less human than others. To resist harmful humanist taxonomies, Press suggests replacing the older notion of cosmopolitanism with her concept of "terrestrial cosmopolitanism", which focuses on environmental human and nonhuman (interspecies) collectivities that are more inclusive and can accommodate humanism's underrepresented others.

Using recent work in postcolonial environmental humanities (e.g., Homi Bhabha, Aarthi Vadde, Jill Didur), she explores the "interspecies alliances" in Shani Mootoo's novel *Cereus Blooms at Night*, in which the protagonist (Mala) figures as a "posthuman" model. In the novel, the relation between animal, human, and vegetable world is "normalized", and in this sense, the natural world is turned into a metaphorical space where differences can be explored without the interference of hidden hierarchies. A cosmopolitanism based on posthumanist interspecies alliance is built on the imperative for mutual respect and coexistence, even without fully understanding the other. Against Kant's cosmopolitan philosophy which positioned some humans (i.e., Europeans) as more human than others, Press invokes Homi Bhabha's "third space theory", which acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual as a hybridized product of his/her "biological and environmental circumstances" and redefines identity as equally impacted by one's proximity to the natural world as by other factors, such as race and gender.

The novel, *Cereus Blooms at Night*, as Press shows, illuminates the past exclusion of certain subjectivities and the homogenization of plurality, both as an effect of colonial Christian discourses and of the taxonomic nomenclature of natural science in an attempt subjugate the natural world. The protagonist's (Mala's) intuitive understanding of the environment, and her refusal to conform to normative human language and behavior, thus make her a symbolic posthuman figure of hope. Press's article is not only a critical analysis of the harmful implications of anthropomorphic cosmopolitanism, but it also delivers a timely response to a global crisis by foregrounding a shared space of subjectivities bent on coexistence, compassion, and the love of nature.

The contributions in this volume all suggest interesting new concepts of cosmopolitanism that avoid hierarchical, exclusionary, or unduly universalizing practices of the past. Instead, they focus on complex multilayered modes of representation (e.g., mis-en-abyme, chronotope), which reveal spatial or temporal forms of co-existence and foreground alternative collectives that help us envision more inclusive models of cosmopolitanism in the twenty-first century.

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