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Beyond the Nation:  
American Expatriate Writers  
and the Process of Cosmopolitanism  

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
Requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  

in  

Literature  

by  

Alexa Weik  

Committee in charge:  

Professor Michael Davidson, Chair  
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Professor Lisa Lowe  
Professor Don Wayne  

2008
The Dissertation of Alexa Weik is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm:

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2008
To my mother Barbara,
for her everlasting love and support.
“Life has suddenly changed. The confines of a community are no longer a single town, or even a single nation. The community has suddenly become the whole world, and world problems impinge upon the humblest of us.”

– Pearl S. Buck
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Beyond the Nation:
American Expatriate Writers
and the Process of Cosmopolitanism

by

Alexa Weik

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

University of California, San Diego, 2008

Professor Michael Davidson, Chair

Cosmopolitanism, the understanding of oneself as a ‘citizen of the world,’ has enjoyed a highly interdisciplinary comeback in recent years. Taking up the challenges posed by ever-increasing global migration and neo-liberal globalization, scholars have been evaluating cosmopolitanism’s potential as a possible corrective or even counter-discourse to both nationalism and global corporate capitalism. My project in this context is twofold: on the one hand, I am interested in how the actually-existing cosmopolitanism(s)—to use Bruce Robbins’s term—of a selection of American writers have looked, in moments of both success and of failure. On the other hand, I am building a new understanding of the process of cosmopolitan development as such; drawing on Hans-Georg Gadamer’s intercultural hermeneutic, Martha Nussbaum’s work on the
emotional structure of thought and Paul Smith’s location of agency in ideological conflict, I argue that cosmopolitanism is best understood as a mode of solidarity across national, racial, class, and religious borders, something constantly evolving and entailing necessary moments of (Cynic) detachment and (Stoic) re- and multiple emotional attachment. I thus offer a theory of affect-driven cosmopolitanism-in-process, which develops through emotional engagement in recurring moments of ideological interpellation.

To illustrate how this process works in practice, I provide four ‘case studies’ of actually existing cosmopolitanism(s) in 20th-century U.S. writers, as expressed in their life choices and in their fiction and non-fiction writings. Each of the writers considered—Kay Boyle, Richard Wright, William Gardner Smith, and Pearl S. Buck—developed partially lived and ever-shifting sets of beliefs and solidarities that not only outgrew the domestic concerns of the American nation, but also transcended narrowly defined attachments to their own racial, ethnic or religious communities. As we recognize the importance of the “imaginative engagement” with the literatures and cultures of “other” people for the furthering of a less isolationist and more cosmopolitan vision, it seems crucial that we also reengage with such writers within (and often on the margins of) the American literary canon who went beyond the American nation, both physically and imaginatively, in order to engage seriously and openly with Others.
INTRODUCTION

Cosmopolitanism, the understanding of oneself as a “citizen of the world,” has enjoyed a splendid and highly interdisciplinary comeback in recent years. Thinkers in a wide array of disciplines—including philosophy, political theory, anthropology, sociology, geography, and cultural and literary theory—have discussed the revival of cosmopolitanism as a counter-discourse to both nationalism and global corporate capitalism. These “new cosmopolitans,” as David Hollinger has called them, see the need, in a contemporary world shaped by transnational economic and social forces such as globalization, (labor) migration, nationalism(s), feminism, and multiculturalism, for a vision that is unifying while allowing for difference, and they have—with varying degrees of ambivalence—settled on calling this vision ‘cosmopolitanism.’¹ World citizenship thus understood, they hope, might help us theorize how we can build solidarities across national, racial, religious and cultural borders, without insisting on a fixed universalism that privileges one worldview over all others.

The historical need for a new cosmopolitan vision has also been translated into potential guiding principles for American (and non-American) education. In 1994, philosopher Martha Nussbaum unsettled her American colleagues when she called for a (Stoic) cosmopolitan education at U.S. universities. Such an education, Nussbaum argued, would teach students “that they are, above all, citizens of a world of human beings, and that while they happen to be situated in the United States, they have to

share this world with other human beings” (1996, 6). In her presidential address at the 2005 MLA Annual Convention, Domna Stanton took up such challenges to institutional schooling, emphasizing with recourse to Kwame Anthony Appiah’s recent book the importance of rooted cosmopolitanism “as an educational ideal and a rich literary and cultural mine” (Stanton 631). In this context, Stanton particularly stressed the value of the *imaginative engagement* with other cultures that people experience through literature, an engagement she considers essential for intercultural understanding in a globalized and ever-shrinking world.

While “imaginative engagement” with other cultures is indeed likely to be an important factor in the formal and non-formal education of future world citizens, this must mean more than simply a call for more studies in Comparative Literature. Comparative readings of literature are certainly valuable, perhaps even critical for a cosmopolitan approach to literary studies, cosmopolitan education and cosmopolitanism itself must be more than this. First of all, it seems important that we realize the limitations of a purely *imaginative* engagement. Political scientist Bonnie Honig asks for a more political dimension within cosmopolitan education, stressing that it is imperative for future world citizens “to acquire second and even third languages, to understand their own cultures and political arrangements as part of a larger network of democratic possibilities, to see those arrangements as platforms from which to form subnational and international coalitions” (Honig 1998, 210). An actually existing cosmopolitanism, however—to use Bruce Robbins’s term—may require even more than that. That is to say, conceptual engagement with the worlds of others and political activism,
while vital, are not enough. Indeed, Ralph Waldo Emerson’s famous dictum that “the mind travels best when the body stays at home” might easily lead to a profound misconception of what the imaginatively visited Other actually looks like. Lived experience and practice seem to be essential aspects of any “actually existing” cosmopolitanism.

If we recognize its inevitable limitations, however, an “imaginative engagement” with the literatures and cultures of “others” still seems an important contribution that Literary Studies can make to the education of future world citizens. At the very least, it can be a first step. However, I want to suggest that while we learn to engage with texts from other cultures, we who study American Literature must also re-engage with texts from writers within (and often on the margins of) the American literary canon who are already involved in cosmopolitan projects of their own—authors who go beyond the American nation, both physically and imaginatively, in order to engage seriously and openly with Others. And while it is not a coincidence that most of these writers either lived abroad or at least traveled widely, dislocation alone by no means guarantees an orientation toward a cosmopolitan mindset. The expatriated members of the famed Lost Generation, for example, from Fitzgerald to Stein, have often been labeled ‘cosmopolitan’ (following Malcolm Cowley’s description of them in *Exile’s Return*), but on closer inspection the lives of most do not seem to justify that attribution. Rather, their cosmopolitanism was a cultural and to some degree escapist one, meaning ‘widely traveled and intellectually sophisticated.’ The

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social, economic and political affairs of their host countries and of the world as a whole were, for the most part, of interest to them primarily as spectators (if even that); and very rarely did they get personally involved in ways that shifted their loci of identification.

The four authors I have selected for my dissertation, all what I want to call ‘late modernists,’ are, I believe, somewhat differently inclined. All writing the bulk of their work during the 1930s, 40s and 50s, they were deeply involved in the dramatic historical events of their time, using their fictional and non-fictional texts to communicate urgent cries against personal, social, and national violence and appeals for inter-cultural understanding and respect. While their life trajectories show different and highly idiosyncratic itineraries, Kay Boyle, Richard Wright, William Gardner Smith, and Pearl S. Buck all also share a deep political interest in their manifold surroundings, a willingness to actively engage with their Others, and a readiness to take action on behalf of others—regardless of nationality, religious affiliation, or race. Through a (re)consideration of the work of worldly-minded American authors such as these, I argue, we might learn to better understand what different routes (American) cosmopolitan development can take, and how actually existing (American) cosmopolitanism(s) can look, in both their moments of success and of failure.

Literary scholar Timothy Brennan has stressed that individual cosmopolitan visions are in many ways local; indeed they make sense only, Brennan insists, “in the context of a specific national-cultural mood” (2002, 661). If we are hoping to make the citizens of the American superpower more cosmopolitan, then, it may be helpful to
look at some narratives of specifically American cosmopolitan development—with narrative being understood as both a literary and a biographical process. In addition, it might, at least in an American class room, invite the sort of identification necessary to spark cosmopolitan engagements in and beyond that classroom. In a post-9/11, military engagement-driven climate marked by pronounced intercultural suspicion and hostility, it seems particularly imperative that we reengage with some of those voices in American literature that aim for openness, understanding and solidarity, while at the same time speaking out critically about American and non-American issues.

Such renewed inquiry is what I aim at in my dissertation work. The four authors I am discussing, I believe, all developed in the course of their lifetimes and as the result of their (national and transnational) experiences what I term in-process cosmopolitanism: partially lived sets of beliefs and solidarities that emerge in the lived moments of outgrowing the domestic concerns and interests of the American nation, and in extensions of self beyond narrowly defined attachments to racial, ethnic or religious communities. Drawing on Hans-Georg Gadamer’s intercultural hermeneutic, Martha Nussbaum’s work on the emotional structure of thought and Paul Smith’s location of agency in ideological conflict, I develop in the following an understanding of cosmopolitanism that emphasizes the process of becoming a world citizen over its final outcome. Cosmopolitanism is understood here as a complex practice that emerges out of concrete historical and material conditions, and entails the individual agency of human beings. As such, it is constantly evolving, and necessitates moments of both (Cynic) detachment and (Stoic) re- and multiple emotional attachment.
In this thesis, then, I offer a theory of affect-driven cosmopolitanism-in-process, in which agency develops through emotional engagement in conflicting moments of ideological interpellation. And while I, to at least some degree, draw on relatively recent theoretical considerations that have arisen in response to very recent developments in world economics and politics, this seems permissible since the authors in question can, because of their particular life trajectories, be understood as having lived early prototypes of a lifestyle that today is becoming increasingly common. The time period in which they were writing—from roughly 1925 to 1965—was marked by a broad range of technical innovations in transportation and communication heralding the era of modern economic globalization. At the same time, the pronounced intercultural and political suspicion and hostility that marked much of the era led to global efforts—such as the founding of the United Nations—to find new grounds for peaceful international coexistence. Both a climate of suspicion and efforts to counter-balance it (though the threat is now an amorphous, purportedly non-Western “Terror”) continue to be important factors of contemporary international politics. Assuming, as I will in the following, that the cosmopolitanism of individuals emerges at least to some degree in response to the historical-material conditions of their times, the thoughts and engagements of the writers under consideration are therefore by no means ‘outdated.’ Rather, they are concerned with historical developments and problems that still affect us today, perhaps more than ever.

The fact that none of these authors ever managed perfection in their open-minded engagement with and non-parochial care for others makes analysis of their
respective developments all the more important for a processual understanding of world citizenship. After all, one of the most consistent arguments against cosmopolitanism over the years has been that it is too difficult, too abstract, too altruistic—and thus simply too much against human nature—to ever be fully or perfectly achieved. In examining the trajectories of four people whose lack of perfection itself played a role in their striving for cosmopolitan ideals in everyday life, we may see how an imperfect and in many ways ambiguous cosmopolitanism is achievable and—regardless of occasional set-backs or even failures—desirable. It is desirable because a gradual broadening of intellectual and emotional concerns and attachments, which each of the four authors experienced, led in all cases to more open-mindedness and understanding. And led, in consequence, to a literary and socio-political engagement with and for groups and individuals outside of their originary communities and/or nation. This is exactly the kind of intellectual development that scholars like Stanton, Nussbaum and Honig, amongst others, consider an important aspect of responsible world citizenship today.

I thus understand my project as part of recent efforts to conceptualize and analyze ‘cosmopolitan’ literatures, alongside scholars like Bruce Robbins, Timothy Brennan, Amanda Anderson, Jessica Berman, Rebecca Walkowitz, and others. However, this dissertation also shares affinities with recent efforts to reconceptualize American literature as a transnational entity. This multifaceted project, often firming under the heading of “transnational American literature,” understands American literature not as a narrowly defined (and misnamed) national U.S. literature, but, to use the words of
Paula Moya and Ramón Saldívar, as “a heterogeneous grouping of overlapping but distinct discourses that refer to the US in relation to a variety of national entities” (2003, 3). Scholars who are reconceptualizing American literature in such transnational terms include John Carlos Rowe, Lawrence Buell, Donald E. Pease, and Amy Kaplan. Often, however, the proponents of this important work are either scholars of Chicano- and Latino-Studies (such as, for example, Paula Moya and Ramón Saldívar, José David Saldívar, and Michael Hames-García) or scholars of Asian American literature, (including Lisa Lowe, Shirley Geok-Lin Lim, Ruth Hsu, and Gita Rajan). While the first group understands transnational American literature as the “trans-American imaginary”—a term that points to the interrelated colonial and imperial history of the Americas (though mostly concentrating on the Americas south of the U.S. border)—the second group focuses on Asian American literature as necessarily situated in transnational and diasporic conditions. The different but equally transnational African American (and, more broadly, Black Atlantic) discourses, as well as the literature springing from the transnational experiences of white U.S. writers have been much less the focus of this transnational reconceptualization of American literature, although scholars like Moya and Saldívar have repeatedly questioned their absence. This project should go at least some distance toward bridging the gap between these discourses, since it understands the works of white and black American writers as transna-
tional imaginaries and in relation to a variety of other national entities which are related politically, economically and socially to the United States.

Wai Chee Dimock’s and Lawrence Buell’s understanding of American literature as “world literature” is therefore another interesting current project to which I see my own work relating. In *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time* (2006), Dimock argues that “rather than being a discrete entity, [American literature] is better seen as a crisscrossing set of pathways, open-ended and ever multiplying, weaving in and out of other geographies, other languages and cultures” (3). Different routes of transit, she maintains, and different forms of attachment, constitute “connective tissues” that “thread American texts into topical events of other cultures, while also threading the long durations of those cultures into the short chronology of the United States” (3). The readings that I provide in my dissertation should offer a useful supplement to the intriguing and necessary reconceptualizations of American literature that all these scholars push for. After all, the lives and texts of all four American authors under consideration unfolded within the force fields of geographies, cultures and politics of countries other than the U.S., and as results of engagements that were complexly transnational in nature rather than simply imperial (as American engagements so often are). This is why they, in my view, qualify as *cosmopolitan* in its newly emerging sense, and why they and their works should be included in new, transnational conceptions of American literature.

While the group of 20th-century American authors on which I am focusing is in some ways a heterogeneous one—as seems appropriate for a work dealing with cos-
metropolitanism—its members share a number of homogeneous characteristics, the common parameters of this study: (1) They all were born (and died) as American citizens. (2) They were all, for reasons related to issues of class, race, gender, and sexuality, to a certain degree marginalized, and therefore “othered,” in American society. (3) They all spent significant periods of their lives outside of their native country. (4) They and their individual cosmopolitan developments were all deeply affected by WWII and the following Cold War period. (5) They were all engaged in the politics and cultures of their host countries and made an effort to learn their languages—and most of them spoke those languages fluently. (6) They all grappled symbolically with life in their host countries (as well as with their own American heritage) in both fiction and non-fiction works, and tried to assume to some degree the function of mediator between their native cultural context and that of their host countries. (7) They all functioned to some degree as public intellectuals and activists, speaking up in local as well as international media about political concerns in their home and/or host countries. (8) In at least some of their fiction, they were all concerned either with transformative encounters between Americans and non-American cultural contexts, or, in the case of Pearl S. Buck, with stories set within foreign cultures that involved no American characters at all. (9) They nevertheless all kept writing (at least their fiction) in English and kept writing back to an American audience: writing, so to speak, back to the metropolis, even after decades of expatriation. Within these homogenous parameters, however, the individual cosmopolitan development of each author was also very different from that of the others—strongly influenced not only by the specific coordinates of individual
historical situatedness, but also by the particular dislocations involved and by the new material conditions that each dislocation entailed. As a result, their in-process cosmopolitanisms vary, but we can nevertheless observe a number of similarities with regard to the kind of experiences that seemed in each case to have triggered a movement toward a more open-minded, more active, and more engaged approach to the world.

Before considering individual authors, however, I want first to lay the theoretical groundwork for my investigation. Thus, in Chapter 1, I follow the historical trajectory of cosmopolitanism as a concept from its original coining in ancient Greece to contemporary understandings of (new) cosmopolitanism, relating these latter to cultural, political and socio-economic factors that are specific to the U.S.-American context. Chapter 2, then, serves three interrelated theoretical purposes: a situating of my own understanding of cosmopolitanism within contemporary debates around the concept, a critical analysis of the socio-cultural conditions for cosmopolitanism in the United States, and the development of my own concept of cosmopolitanism in process: Drawing on Hans-Georg Gadamer’s intercultural hermeneutic, Martha Nussbaum’s work with the ‘structures of emotions,’ and Paul Smith’s notion of agency as arising where ideological interpellations come into conflict, I then develop my own theoretical understanding of cosmopolitanism in process, expanding and developing this further in each of the successive author chapters.

Chapter 3 concerns itself with the life and work of Kay Boyle, as lived and produced in more or less continuous transit around France, Austria, England, Germany, and, eventually, the U.S. In her early (and often highly autobiographical) fiction,
Boyle explores the problems implicit in the more Cynic, homeless brand of cosmopolitanism. What emerges in this investigation is not only Boyle’s own conflicted relationship to questions of rootedness and belonging, but also a new understanding of the increasingly popular concept of “rooted cosmopolitanism.” The second part of the chapter is dedicated to Boyle’s novels of the 1940s. With recourse to the writings of Hannah Arendt, Giorgio Agamben, Slavoj Žižek, and Jacques Rancière, I consider the cosmopolitan problem of statelessness and human rights that is so important in Boyle’s work (and life) in France and the U.S., both during and after WWII.

Chapter 4 develops the tension between Cynic and Stoic cosmopolitanism further, comparing Richard Wright’s radical Cynicism in his 1956 *Pagan Spain*—in which he claims to have no country, no religion, no traditions and no race—with his actually existing cosmopolitanism, which turns out to be of a much more Stoic, and thus multiply attached, variety. This we see particularly clearly in Wright’s existential novel *The Outsider* and in his to-this-day-unpublished “Island of Hallucination.” Wright was, as Paul Gilroy has shown, a Western and deeply *American* intellectual, regardless of his outsider status as *African* American, and he realized the extent of both identifications only when confronted with the African/Asian Other. Despite his continued psychic situatedness in American and Western culture, however, Wright *was* interested in larger, transnational and transracial political solidarities, and believed that he could always profit from encounters with Others. The somewhat earlier *Black Power* and *The Color Curtain* exhibit, despite limitations and failures, openness toward new understandings and a move toward a Sartrean sort of intersubjectivity
Such intersubjectivity includes a constant renegotiation of the author’s own cultural bias that in turn shares important aspects with Hans-Georg Gadamer’s understanding of the conversation.

Chapter 5 considers the importance of the concept of sensitivity in the cosmopolitan life and work of the William Gardner Smith, a relatively little known African American writer who for a time belonged to the same black expatriate community as Richard Wright. Smith’s autobiographical Last of the Conquerors (1948) deals with the experiences of black American GIs in postwar Germany, and is particularly interesting not only for its eloquent critique of segregation in the U.S. army, but also for its “blind spots” with regards to German anti-black racism. The Stone Face (1963), written when Smith had already lived for many years as an expatriate in France, is the only African American novel to deal with the complicated relationship of the black U.S. community in Paris to the Algerian war. A contextual reading of The Stone Face—including Smith’s real life choices (for example, his work at Ghana Television under Nkrumah) as well as his non-fiction (especially his 1970 Return to Black America)—suggests possibilities for the successful negotiation of political commitment within a cosmopolitan framework. Smith’s understanding of ‘sensitivity’ in all of his books as a quality that is risky for one’s personal safety while also crucial for the development of intersubjectivity helps us better understand the affective engagement with the Other that characterizes cosmopolitanism in process.

Chapter 6 explores several significant ways in which Pearl S. Buck’s cosmopolitan trajectory differs from those of the first three authors. Because she was only
three months old when her parents took her to China, where they were stationed as
Southern Presbyterian ministers, Buck is something of an outlier among my cases, re-
presenting an alternative cosmopolitan path. Buck’s cosmopolitanism, as expressed in
her fiction and non-fiction, was a direct outgrowth of her immersion in and interaction
with multiple cultures; nevertheless, she developed over time an emotional attachment
to the American nation that in her view was not in the least at odds with her cosmo-
politan commitment. Indeed, we may have to see her in the long tradition of (mostly
American) thinkers who believe that the U.S. has an exceptional potential for becom-
ing an internally and externally cosmopolitan nation.

The ever-changing, conflicted relationships that all four authors display toward
the American nation is one variable to which I want to pay especially close attention.
In this context, it seems relevant that only two of the authors under consideration—
Pearl S. Buck and Kay Boyle—went back to the U.S.: both after decades of expatri-
ation and as a result of warfare in their host countries. The other two—Richard Wright
and William Gardner Smith—both died in their chosen host countries. Nevertheless,
with the exception of Kay Boyle, none of these authors ever gave up their American
citizenship, even if they had to live for a while—as did William Gardner Smith—without
a valid American passport. And Kay Boyle, who did give up her citizenship at age
21, as a result of her marriage to a Frenchman, later successfully applied for repatri-
ation. Furthermore, while all four authors display highly critical and sometimes very
angry attitudes towards the American nation, none of them became simply anti-
American. Rather, all seem to have lived in a continuous struggle to reconcile their emerging cosmopolitanisms with a residual national consciousness.

An important question, then, is whether American ideology might indeed pose specific problems for the emerging cosmopolitanism not only of these writers, but for American citizens in general. If it does, then a cosmopolitan education, as has been called for by social and literary critics such as Nussbaum, Stanton and Honig, should include the critical investigation of fictional and non-fictional works by American authors who have grappled with these problems. Reading and discussing Boyle, Wright, Smith and Buck, amongst others, might be valuable starting point for an intellectual development that leads beyond the immediate and parochial concerns of the American nation, leading to a life-long and hopefully increasingly open-minded, diversified and complex understanding of the world. Such an understanding, by definition, can never be complete or fixed, but must always be preliminary and in process.
CHAPTER 1

A Brief History of Cosmopolitanism

On May 25, 1948, former Broadway actor and bomber pilot Garry Davis walked into the United States Embassy in Paris, and handed the authorities his American passport. He had no use for identification papers any longer, he declared to the perplexed officials, since from now on he was going to live without his U.S. or any other citizenship, a free and independent man. While dropping bombs on German civilians during WWII, Davis explains in his 1961 autobiography *The World Is My Country*, he had come to understand that the roots of war were inherent in the nation-state itself, an institution that he considered to be upheld by nothing more than myth and the “slavery of tradition” (Davis 24). As a result of this recognition, Davis had decided to henceforward reject all exclusive loyalties and, as a citizen of the world, give his primary allegiance to mankind as a whole. This is what he was explaining to the rather puzzled American consul. After some debate, and after officially prescribing some time to think things over, the consul finally followed the young man’s wishes and administered the Oath of Renunciation, declaring Davis thereby stateless.

Determined not to break any laws, be they American or French, Davis went promptly to the *Bureau d’Étrangers*, presenting them with the American document that confirmed his lack of citizenship, and asking them for a legitimization of his presence as a stateless world citizen in France. The French officials, for their part, now showed considerable confusion about what to do with the new-born world citizen living on their soil. For the time being, they decided to give him a 90-day visa, which
they stamped—for want of better alternatives—on the very same paper slip that said Davis no longer had an American passport.

On November 12 of the same year, with his French visa running out, Davis took up residence on the grounds of the Palais de Chaillot, which had been temporarily declared international territory for the meeting of the UN General Assembly. Camping out on the steps of the old palace, Davis became an instant celebrity, and his claim to world citizenship, which he related directly to hopes for ‘perpetual peace’ and the prevention of World War III, was the topic of many private and public discussions, particularly in France and Germany. But also on the other side of the Atlantic, his gesture had, in early days of the Cold War, not gone unnoticed. The New Yorker acknowledged that “Mr. Davis, whether he acted wisely or foolishly, is in step with the universe. The rest of us march to a broken drum,” and Life noted that Davis had “aroused a deep longing for peace.”¹ Soon enough, Davis was showered with mail from all over the world, addressed to “Garry Davis, Steps of the Palais de Chaillot,” or to “Garry Davis, World Citizen, Paris” (Davis 55).

These addresses, as well as many of Davis’s deliberations, are strongly reminiscent of another, much earlier, world citizen: Diogenes of Sinope, the Cynic philosopher who famously declared himself a kosmopolitês—a “citizen of the cosmos”—and who chose to spend his life in a tub belonging to the temple of Cybele, a Greek deification of the Earth Mother.² After having either fled or been exiled from his

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¹ Quoted in Garry Davis’s autobiography The World Is my Country, pp. 55.
² Many theorists have argued that the more common translation of kosmopolitês into “citizen of the world” is misleading, since in the Greek word ‘kosmos’ does refers much more to the universe than to the ‘world’ in its more limited sense.
native Sinope (accounts differ on this), Diogenes had relocated to Athens, where he discovered—apparently from observing a mouse—that he had no need for a house or any other conventional shelter, and that he preferred to live simply, like a dog, on the streets of Athens.\(^3\) Described as a “Socrates gone mad” by no less a commentator than Plato himself, Diogenes refused to comply with Athenian conventions, insisting that life in line with reason is life in line with nature.\(^4\) This, for him, implied that reasonable life was too big for the narrow laws and conventions of the Athenian, or any polis.\(^5\) Like other Cynic cosmopolitans, Diogenes rejected all communal responsibilities by claiming to be a natural citizen of the cosmos—and nothing else.

The fact that he famously answered the question ‘Where are you from?’ with the words ‘I am a citizen of the cosmos,’ is, as philosophers Pauline Kleingeld and Eric Brown point out, a rejection of affiliation and responsibility, and therefore usually understood as a negative claim. “By identifying himself not as a citizen of Sinope but as a citizen of the world,” Kleingeld and Brown write, “Diogenes was refusing to agree that he owed special service to Sinope and the Sinopeans [or, by extension, to Athens and the Athenians]. So understood, ‘I am a citizen of the cosmos’ is a negative claim, and we might wonder if there is any positive content to the Cynic’s world-

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\(^4\) Diogenes Laertius, Book 6, Chapter 54. It is not entirely without irony, however, that Diogenes spent this “life in line with nature” in a man-made tub on the bustling streets of Athens.

This ‘negative’ Cynic outlook is often contrasted with the cosmopolitanism of the Stoic philosophers, who developed Cynic thought on world citizenship further and in a somewhat different direction. Rather than rejecting all allegiances, the Stoic saw himself as a man whose primary allegiance was to a global community of human beings, and simultaneously allowed himself special loyalties to local or more specific communities. While for the Cynics, then, “cosmopolitanism was more a critique of parochialism than a positive theory, the Stoics developed it into an articulate moral doctrine” (Kleingeld 507). Stoic cosmopolitanism is thus a positive claim, one that emphasizes “moral citizenship” and a proliferation of attachments.

Garry Davis’s initial moment of cosmopolitanism, as I have described it above, certainly more closely mirrors the Cynic brand of cosmopolitanism. Rejecting the nation-state, the “polis,” he pledged allegiance to global humanity as such, and wanted to be regarded by his interlocutors—particularly by American and French officials—as a “natural” human being, and not as a citizen. “My humanity,” he insists in his autobiography, “required no documentation and it could not evaporate by crossing artificial frontiers” (23). Being a stateless “non-citizen,” for Davis, is what constitutes being a “free human being;” the American flag, in contrast, just as the American passport, represents “only division, aggressiveness, fear and the terrible consequences” of those traits (24).

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7 Davis’ disdain for the American passport is, one may of course object, only possible because of his privileged position as a former holder of such a passport. As stateless refugees throughout history might attest, the relationship between citizenship and freedom, in practice, can be considerably more complicated than Davis’ formulation. Indeed, the relative success of his World Passport program becomes
Davis would learn soon enough, however, that in a world divided into nation-states a “free human being” without any kind of identification papers, is, as the friendly official at the *Bureau d’Étrangers* explains to him, “nothing, nothing, nothing!” (Davis 25). Understanding the needs of the nation-state, Davis thus resorted to creating his own “World Passport” and—in a story almost too good to be true—has managed in the past 50 years to get this world passport recognized in 150 countries “on a de facto basis” (he has, however, also been imprisoned 34 times for not having appropriate papers). In addition, Davis has founded the World Citizen Foundation and considers himself a “candidate for World President for the World Government of World Citizens.” This might tell us many things, but important for my purposes is that Davis seems to have made, in his cosmopolitan development, a movement from a ‘negative,’ Cynic vision toward one that is much closer to the ‘positive,’ Stoic one. A rejection of all attachments, in Davis’s case, was followed by a search for new attachments, new communities, based on different communalities.

This movement from a more Cynic to a more Stoic cosmopolitanism is, as we will see, not unusual within cosmopolitan developments. A near-total rejection of the home country often seems desirable in the early stages of cosmopolitan development, but, as I will show in chapter 2 and 3 with reference to the lives and works of Kay Boyle and Richard Wright, for a number of reasons it proves difficult to sustain. That, almost inconceivable if one imagines he had renounced, for example, Senegalese citizenship. I will return to the problem of statelessness in my discussion of Kay Boyle in Chapter 2.

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8 This information is taken from Garry Davis’s website, http://www.garrydavis.org/index.html, accessed on March 19, 2007. The World Service Authority, founded by Davis, which claims to have issued over 2,500,000 World Passports, warns that Canada, France, Germany, Switzerland, Great Britain, and the U.S. are countries in which the passport “almost never works.” The International Registry of World Citizens, founded also by Davis in 1949, registers over 740,000 individuals in 150 countries.
however, does not imply that we should dismiss Cynic detachment as a misguided and problematic form of cosmopolitanism. Rather, as I will show throughout my dissertation, moments of both (Cynic) detachment and (Stoic) attachment(s) form important, and perhaps dialectically integrated, parts of the cosmopolitan trajectory.

In first giving up his American citizenship for the status of permanent statelessness, and then creating his own “World Passport,” Garry Davis subscribed to a version of world citizenship that was remarkably bold and radical. It is not a version of cosmopolitanism, however, that gains much currency with what David Hollinger has called the “new cosmopolitans.” While rarely calling for the abolition of the nation-state, these theorists (in disciplines as diverse as philosophy, sociology, political science, anthropology, history, and literary and cultural studies) do share with Davis a concern for what Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen call, in their introduction to Conceiving Cosmopolitanism (2002), “the two basic cosmopolitan questions: “Can we ever live peacefully with one another? What do we share, collectively, as human beings?” The continued relevance of these questions is the reason why—with varying degrees of ambivalence—the ‘new cosmopolitans’ have decided to take up and reconceptualize the age-old concept of world citizenship. The hope is that, over

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time, it will be possible to rid the term of its Eurocentric and elitist connotations, to let it stand for something different and newly emergent.

After its origins in ancient Greece, cosmopolitanism was particularly *en vogue* during the Enlightenment, most prominently in the work of Immanuel Kant, who made use of the concept in his famous essay on *Perpetual Peace* (1795). Under the rubric of cosmopolitanism, he discusses the importance of hospitality, republicanism and the existence of a ‘league of nations’ for a permanent world peace.11 Stressing the importance of the ‘right of universal hospitality’ (Gastrecht), or ‘cosmopolitan right’ (Weltbürgerrecht), Kant envisages a world in which all human beings are in lawful association with one another and participate in a (global) civil order. What is problematic about Kant’s vision of world citizenship, however, as David Harvey has perhaps most prominently shown, is that it is severely compromised by his *Geography* (1804), which, as Harvey puts it “is nothing short of an intellectual and political embarrassment” (Harvey 532).12

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11 As to the question of how inherently Eurocentric cosmopolitanism and its ideals and values are (before Kant and the Enlightenment project), opinions seem to diverge. Vertovec and Cohen emphasize that “many of the founders of cosmopolitanism, the Stoics in ancient Athens, were Phoenicians or Semites from the ‘wrong’ (non-European) side of the Mediterranean. . . . cosmopolitanism has a much wider and more complex genealogy than that arising from either Kant or the Greeks” (14). The Indian economist Amartya Sen, similarly, in a piece entitled “Humanity and Citizenship,” criticizes Gertrude Himmelfarb’s assertion that concepts like justice, right, reason, and the love of humanity are “predominantly, perhaps even uniquely Western values” (Himmelfarb 75). Himmelfarb’s argument, he explains, “has internal problems, because of the factual weakness in her sharp distinction between Western and non-Western values. . . . I can only conclude that she simply has not yet taken much interest in the not insubstantial literature on these and related matters in Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese and Arabic” (Sen 117). Sen further argues, in agreement with Nussbaum, that it is not so much a problem of uniquely Western cosmopolitan values, but rather that such values—existent in all cultures in different formations—are abused, ignored and misconstrued everywhere, *including* the West (117). Chinese geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, however, asserts, in *Cosmos and Hearth*, that a cosmopolitan “concern for the welfare of total strangers is uniquely developed in the West” (170).

12 *Geography* is the published version of Kant’s lecture course on the same topic, a course that he, as Harvey informs us, “taught no less than forty-nine times” (Harvey 534).
Indeed, Kant’s claim in *Perpetual Peace*, that “the peoples of the earth have entered in varying degrees into a universal community, and it is developed to the point where a violation of laws in one part of the world is felt everywhere” (Kant 1991: 108), loses some of its charm if contrasted with his assertion in *Geography* that “humanity achieves its greatest perfection with the white race. The yellow Indians have somewhat less talent. The negroes are much inferior and some of the peoples of the Americas are well below them” (Kant quoted in Harvey 533). Kant’s rather rampant racism in these lines of course reflects the common convictions of his time. All the same, it has serious implications for Kant’s cosmopolitan project, which distinguishes, as Seyla Benhabib points out, between “those who are full members of the sovereign body,” and those “who ‘fall under its protection,’ but who do not enjoy ‘full membership rights’” (Benhabib 2004, 45). Under such conditions, Benhabib explains, “women and slaves, servants, and propertyless white males, non-Christians and non-white races” are “excluded from . . . the project of citizenship. They were, in Kant’s famous words, mere ‘auxiliaries to the commonwealth’” (45-6). In spite of the limitations posed by Kant’s decidedly Eurocentric outlook, however, he remains one of the most important thinkers in the field of political cosmopolitanism.

Kant’s concept of a global civic order was particularly attractive after the humanitarian catastrophes of WWI and II. In 1919, Woodrow Wilson’s 14-point pro-

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gram led the Paris Peace Conference to the founding of the (Kantian) League of Nations, in hopes of ensuring the peaceful coexistence of nations and preventing another World War. After WWII made it clear that the League of Nations could not accomplish the latter, it was replaced by the United Nations, which, with its emphasis on international law, international security, economic development and human rights, still embodied much of the Kantian spirit. Kant’s emphasis on global peace, cosmopolitan rights, and intercultural hospitality also inspired the post-war work of Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers, who had experienced for themselves what it meant to be(come) a stateless individual.\textsuperscript{14} The ‘cosmopolitan intellectual’ championed by Jaspers and Arendt in their post-war writings is indeed, as Ned Curthoys points out, “a persona fashioned in response to their experience of the horrors of nationalism, racism, and totalitarianism.”\textsuperscript{15} Arendt and Jaspers’s understanding of the world citizen, Curthoys explains, ‘shares in a moment of cosmopolitan idealism that shaped legal vocabularies in and after the Second World War. Their correspondence and writings are inflected with a post-Kantian vocabulary of human rights enshrined in the 1948 UN Genocide Convention and 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property, with the latter’s phraseology of the ‘cultural heritage of all mankind’ and ‘culture of the world’.”\textsuperscript{16} The deeply Eurocentric bias of this vocabulary—often a point of contention

\textsuperscript{14} Arendt was of course herself a Jewish refugee, and Jaspers was removed from his university position in Nazi Germany on grounds of his wife’s Jewishness.


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
in contemporary discussions on human rights—was, at this point, not scrutinized all too deeply.\(^{17}\)

Jasper’s and Arendt’s enthusiasm for the cosmopolitan, geographically homeless ‘citizen of the world’ and Garry Davis’s 1948 decision to become voluntarily stateless are far from the only evidence of a link between the brutality of WWII and the desire for cosmopolitanism. This link is further underlined when we relate Arendt’s philosophical work to the fiction and non-fiction of Kay Boyle; as I will show in chapter 3, Boyle’s work of the 1930s and 40s shares many concerns with Arendt’s. From the 1930s on, Boyle’s fiction reflected her growing social engagement, concerning itself with questions of human rights in a Europe first threatened by the growth of fascism and then torn apart by WWII. Boyle’s novels *Primer for Combat* (1942) and *1939* (1948) display particularly well her awareness of the problem of statelessness for questions of human rights, and this concern springs from similar experiences and shows productive parallels, as I will show, to Arendt’s engagement with cosmopolitanism in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1952).

If the period of European fascism and WWII was marked by state aggression against Others, in the following Cold War period states became obsessed with the idea of *containing* their Others both inside and outside their territory. Although the founding of the United Nations in 1945 and the passing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 build on (Kantian) cosmopolitan ideas, much of the West was too scared of the Marxist and Communist concept of proletarian internationalism to

\(^{17}\) See, for example, Slavoj Žižek, “Against Human Rights” *New Left Review* 34 (July/August 2005): 115-131.
feel comfortable with anything that even remotely resembled its transnational social impetus. Stalin, on the other hand, used the term “rootless cosmopolitans” as a political euphemism for the persecuted Jewish population of the Soviet Union. Both superpowers were in their ways highly suspicious of individuals unwilling to subscribe entirely to their respective ideologies and tried the best they could to seal their own territories hermetically from possible infiltration by the ideological other. At the same time, ironically, they were engaged in a strategic global—and in many ways imperialist—scramble over what was considered the Third World, both looking for allies, at best, and pawns, at worst, for their icy battle.

In the midst of these anti-cosmopolitan tendencies in world politics during the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, however, a different understanding of cosmopolitanism became quite popular amongst leftist intellectuals in the U.S. As I will discuss in greater detail in the following chapter as well as in my chapter on Pearl S. Buck, this understanding was based on the idea that American society was innately cosmopolitan. Originally suggested by French intellectual Alexis de Tocqueville and later developed by American intellectuals such as John Dewey and Randolph Bourne, this cherishing of domestic cosmopolitanism found quite a following in the 40s and 50s, a phenomenon that we cannot separate from the material conditions of both WWII and the Cold War era. America, in this interpretation, was seen as a secure bastion for the persecuted but highly gifted intellectual and scientific elites of the world, who found shelter and safety in the U.S. not only from aggression but also from the stifling effects of Commu-

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nist egalitarianism. In this particular form, (domestic) cosmopolitanism could quite effortlessly be combined with American patriotism. However, that brand of cosmopolitanism which *transcended* national loyalties as well as religious, political, or racial borders—as it was practiced by all the American writers under consideration here—was considered dangerous and potentially treacherous. The fact that all four writers were suspected of being “enemies of the State” during this period, and were thus under surveillance by the FBI and CIA, is an indication of the apprehension with which U.S. officials reacted to versions of cosmopolitanism that refused exclusive attachments to the American nation while at the same time building other loyalties and speaking back critically to American socio-economic and political conditions.

The poststructuralist currents of thought that were to become dominant in the intellectual sphere in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, found new grounds for suspicion of cosmopolitanism. Especially the philosophical-political concept of cosmopolitanism, as we can trace it from Kant to Arendt, was believed to be too universalist and Eurocentric in its approach to have anything meaningful to say to a world increasingly marked by decolonization and economic globalization. The strong intellectual currents of

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19 More recently, however, influential poststructuralist thinkers have concerned themselves with cosmopolitanism. Jacques Derrida, for example, investigates in *Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (2001), with recourse to Hannah Arendt, the banality of evil. Like Arendt, he is interested in the question of why humans can act inhumanely to other humans; however, he asks this question in the political context of the European Union, which, while opening up borders internally, closes its borders all the more firmly externally (French philosopher Etienne Balibar is investigating similar concerns in *We, the People of Europe* (2006)). Derrida asks what kind of borders would be appropriate for a more cosmopolitan Europe and advocates a form of Kantian hospitality, while at the same time criticizing Kant for making hospitality a matter of State sovereignty, which to Derrida seems misguided. Julia Kristeva also has concerned herself with political dimensions of cosmopolitanism, in both *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991) and *Nations without Nationalism* (1993). Like many theorists before her, she embraces the model of concentric circles for a person’s cosmopolitan expansion, going from self to family, to homeland, to Europe, and, finally Mankind. The problem with her argument is the same as that which I will discuss with respect to other theorists arguing on the same model (for example
feminism, postcolonialism, and the civil rights movement additionally discredited concepts belonging firmly to an old-fashioned Eurocentric humanism. For Kant, the Other is, after all, always understood in terms of traits shared with Europeans; and this approach is marked by a need for sameness and conformity that compels him, ultimately, to ‘same’ the Other. Kant’s judgment that the “race of the Negroes”—with whom he could have had little or no contact, having never left his hometown of Königsberg—was generally lacking “a capacity for moral maturity,” and his resulting conviction that it was up to benevolent Europeans to include the less gifted non-European Others in a shared human community, are emblematic of the evils of Eurocentric Enlightenment cosmopolitanism.

With such a standard-bearer, it is small wonder that cosmopolitanism was dismissed by the racially and socially conscious intellectuals of the latter part of the twentieth century. Instead, it was multiculturalism that became fashionable, with its celebration of difference and its emphasis on diverse and separate ethnic identities. The old Enlightenment values of universal rights and cosmopolitan ideals were now attacked for their potential to assimilate minority groups into mainstream society. In the United States, the older ideal of the “melting pot” was gradually replaced by the multicultural “salad bowl,” and the vision of a society melted together through assimilation and integration gave way to that of a country with a colorful range of independent ethnic, religious and cultural groups.

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Thus, when Martha Nussbaum called in 1994 for the introduction of a Stoic cosmopolitanism in American education, the response was less than enthusiastic. Interestingly enough, however, the majority of Nussbaum’s critics did not attack from the vantage-points of poststructuralism and the intellectual left. Instead, the responses to Nussbaum’s essay, “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism,” collected in For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism (1996), came from liberal American philosophers and political theorists: from Hillary Putnam and Charles Taylor to Michael Walzer and Amy Goodman. The debate circled—with few exceptions—surprisingly narrowly around the importance of patriotic feelings, national necessities, and the practical impossibility of world citizenship. Very few challenged Nussbaum’s laudable concern with cosmopolitanism where it seemed most vulnerable: in its decidedly Eurocentric, even U.S.-centered, perspective. While Nussbaum does work from one Indian text, Rabindranath Tagore’s The Home and the World (1919), her argument otherwise relies solely on the Western philosophical tradition. In a particularly insular moment, she names as one of the pressing reasons why ‘we’ should be concerned with cosmopolitanism “the pollution of third-world nations that are attempting to attain our high standard of living” (Nussbaum 12). Why? Because air doesn’t stop traveling at national borders. If we are not more cosmopolitan, so the message runs, this whole third-world pollution problem will end up in American air.21 This is only one of several examples exposing the predominantly American concern and bias of Nussbaum’s

21 Interestingly, Nussbaum appears oblivious—in this particular moment, at least—to the role of the West in promoting pollution at home and in the world, and to the still ongoing practice of some developed nations of using the less developed countries as their dumpsters. Kristin Shrader-Frenchette gives an excellent overview of these particularly anti-cosmopolitan practices in her Environmental Justice: Creating Equality, Reclaiming Democracy. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
call for a revival of cosmopolitanism.\textsuperscript{22} Such a bias seems to make her argument problematic in the same way that Kant’s argument was problematic, and calls for a conversation with other, less American, and perhaps less Western, perspectives.\textsuperscript{23}

If Nussbaum was not the only one rediscovering cosmopolitanism in the 1990s, her essay certainly did help spark new interest in the concept, provoking responses far beyond those collected in \textit{For Love of Country}.\textsuperscript{24} Taking up the challenges posed by ever-increasing global migration and neo-liberal globalization in the late twentieth century, and the new economies and newly circumscribed labor forces called into being by these movements, scholars began to evaluate cosmopolitanism’s potential as a possible counter-discourse to both nationalism and global corporate capitalism. What was “distinctively new about the revival of cosmopolitanism that began in the 1990s,” explains Pheng Cheah in his 2007 \textit{Inhuman Conditions: On Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights}, was “the attempt to ground the normative critique of nationalism in analyses of contemporary globalization and its effects” (18). This is one of the

\textsuperscript{22} I am well aware of the fact that Nussbaum has her audience in mind in these essays and tries to ‘sell’ cosmopolitanism to an American public that is disinclined to consider such a perspective. The conservatism that most of the responses reveal support her canniness in this matter. However, it seems that what is perhaps at least partially a rhetorical trick ends up undermining the fundamental purpose of her essay. This becomes particularly obvious in the 2002 edition of \textit{For Love of Country}? While a new preface by Nussbaum, dealing with the challenges to cosmopolitanism posed by September 11, is supposed to give the collection a note of actuality, the almost unabashed patriotism of the preface not only widens the gap between Nussbaum’s presumed intentions and her rhetoric, but also highlights the fact that the—unchanged—collection of essays that follows, with its narrow focus on the (apparent) dichotomy of cosmopolitanism and patriotism, seems almost anachronistic in current debates around cosmopolitanism(s). Further, it is questionable whether an inducement to cosmopolitanism in nationalist terms can produce a cultural phenomenon that transcends the nationalism it draws on.

\textsuperscript{23} Martha Nussbaum’s constituency in her discussion of cosmopolitanism is that of most of her writings. While her work is regularly concerned with topics of acute international importance and interest, such as immigration, disability, race, feminism, animal rights and ecology, she often fails to engage with more progressive thinkers outside of mainstream American philosophy.

\textsuperscript{24} In the field of political science, scholars like David Held and Thomas Pogge were concerned with cosmopolitan democracy before or concurrent to Nussbaum’s intervention. And Ulf Hannerz’s important essay on cosmopolitanism, “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture,” was published in 1990 in Mike Featherstone’s essay collection \textit{Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity}. 
reasons why some of these recent re-conceptualizations find the new cosmopolitans looking less to members of cultural and economic elites, and more to those who have been the victims of global economic forces. A particularly pertinent example for this line of thought is the 2002 essay collection *Cosmopolitanism*, edited by Carol Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi Bhabha and Dipesh Chakrabarty. In their introduction the authors argue that

> the cosmopolitanism of our times does not spring from the capitalized ‘virtues’ of Rationality, Universality, and Progress; nor is it embodied in the myth of the nation writ large in the figure of the citizen of the world. Cosmopolitans today are often the victims of modernity, failed by capitalism’s upward mobility, and bereft of those comforts and customs of belonging. Refugees, peoples of the diaspora, and migrants and exiles represent the spirit of the cosmopolitical community. (6)

It would be a mistake, the four authors continue, to understand these somewhat differently situated cosmopolitans as pure ‘victims’ of modernity. Indeed, a complacent “cosmopolitan” Western benevolence in the Kantian tradition runs the risk of failing “to acknowledge the critique of modernity that minoritarian cosmopolitans embody in their historic witness to the twentieth century” (6).

But the “new cosmopolitans” are not only attentive to the forces of globalization. They are also very deliberately moving away from Nussbaum’s universalist and Eurocentric view, emphasizing, as Bruce Robbins does in “The Weird Heights of Cosmopolitanism” (1996), that

> what needs to be done . . . is to shake loose terms like cosmopolitanism and internationalism from the rationalist universality with which each has been entangled since Kant, and thus to perform the delicate work of defining, nurturing, revising, and propagating a cosmopolitan or
internationalist politics that will be more self-limiting and more efficacious than any we have seen” (Robbins 1996, 166-67).

Cosmopolitanism is indeed “back,” as David Harvey puts it (2000, 529)\(^\text{25}\), but it is back with a certain postmodern twist. Unlike Nussbaum, who advocates universal moral cosmopolitan ideals, many of the “new cosmopolitans” insist, like Robbins, that we have to turn to politics and “actually existing cosmopolitanism(s),” which are necessarily “plural and particular” if we want to develop cosmopolitan concepts that are meaningful for everyday life in a globalized world (Robbins 1996, 2). In a sense, this is Kantian cosmopolitanism strained through the cultural logic of multiculturalism. Plurality and diversity are without a doubt the defining features of the remarkable spectrum of current cosmopolitanism(s)—a spectrum that, unsurprisingly, challenges us with myriad neologisms and modifiers.\(^\text{26}\) For any scholar writing today about cosmopolitanism, it is thus imperative to provide a very precise definition of the exact understanding of cosmopolitanism she is working with. This is why, after this brief historical overview, the next chapter will serve three interrelated purposes: a situating of my own understanding of cosmopolitanism within contemporary debates around the concept, a critical analysis of the socio-cultural conditions for cosmopolitanism in the United States, and the development of my concept of ‘cosmopolitanism in process,’ which will be the theoretical foundation for the four author-chapters that follow.


\(^{26}\) As, for example, realistic cosmopolitanism/cosmopolitan realism (Beck), critical cosmopolitanism/dialogical cosmopolitanism (Mignolo), rooted cosmopolitanism/cosmopolitan patriotism/partial cosmopolitanism (Appiah), actually existing cosmopolitanism (Robbins), radical cosmopolitanism/cosmopolitics (Cheah), post-identity cosmopolitanism (Posnock)
CHAPTER 2

Cosmopolitanism in Process

Cosmopolitanism can be a slippery concept. Defining it is a challenge not only because of its long genealogy as a philosophical term, but also because in its more colloquial use, it has been attributed to things and attitudes that would be considered decidedly *un*-cosmopolitan from precisely those philosophical perspectives. To get a sense of the problem, one need only recall that *Cosmopolitan* is the name of a bestselling women’s magazine promoting a turbo-capitalist lifestyle and an inventive sex-life as cure-alls for the modern condition. Many intelligent people—academic and otherwise—when asked what ‘cosmopolitan’ means, come up with definitions that fall somewhere between “somebody who’s on top of fashion” and “a guy that has been places.” These colloquial attributions of cultural sophistication and high mobility—which are not without at least loose relation to the philosophical concept(s)—might also have been what prompted Malcolm Cowley to describe the modernist expatriate generation (which included himself) as cosmopolitan. Many among this group, though, as I will show in the final section of this chapter, fell more than a little short of the sort of intercultural and interperspectival solidarities that make cosmopolitanism more than just a pretty, empty title. With so much slippage and murkiness around, I will start with a precise situating of my own understanding within the matrix of theories of cosmopolitanism, in order to then lay out in detail the approach I take throughout this dissertation.
In their introduction to *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism* (2002), Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen demarcate at least six distinct perspectives within the very heterogeneous currents of cosmopolitan thought, and their categories help situate my own approach. The two scholars distinguish between cosmopolitanism as

(a) a socio-cultural condition;
(b) a philosophy or world view;
(c) a political project that works towards building transnational institutions;
(d) a political project for recognizing multiple identities;
(e) an attitudinal or dispositional orientation; and/or
(f) a mode of practice or competence (9).

Among these six categories, it is the first and the final two that are of particular importance for my own project, and I will take these as starting points for my investigation of the challenges that cosmopolitanism holds for human beings in general, and for the four American authors under consideration here in particular. Unsurprisingly, it is rather difficult to draw clear lines between these different “perspectives on cosmopolitanism.” They tend to overlap and inform one another—a fact that mirrors well the “messiness” of actual cosmopolitan development, in which the personal, the interpersonal, the political and the cultural always intersect and interact.

**Beyond the Nation within It: Socio-Cultural Conditions of/for Cosmopolitanism**

Cosmopolitanism as a socio-cultural condition, as Vertovec and Cohen understand it, results from an increasingly “socially and culturally interpenetrated planet.” Radical interpenetration, in this narrative, almost inevitably, furthers “vibrant cultural activity” and poses “challenges to various ethnocentric, racialized, gendered and national narratives” (9). While James Clifford and others have shown that such inter-
cultural penetration has long been “the norm,”¹ the rate of cultural exchange certainly
did increase particularly rapidly and steadily throughout the twentieth century. As a
result of what David Harvey has labeled “time-space compression”—a felt acceleration
of time and shrinking of distance produced by developments in technologies of
communication, transportation and economics—everyone everywhere now knows
more about everyone everywhere else than ever before (1990, 306-7). Cosmopoli-
tanism as a socio-cultural condition, then, seems roughly to correspond with what
German sociologist Ulrich Beck has termed “banal cosmopolitanism,” a condition “in
which everyday nationalism is circumvented and undermined and we experience our-
selves integrated into global processes and phenomena” (Beck 2002, 28). Such mo-
dern and post-modern global conditions necessarily played their role in the cosmopoli-
tan development of all of the authors I will be considering; these were people born
early enough to know sea travel as the means of transportation between continents, all
of whom lived long enough to experience what it meant to cross the same distances in
airplanes.² I suggest, however, that the particular historical and socio-cultural condi-
tions of the United States were much more significant and decisive for each of the
individual cosmopolitan developments I will be examining

“Cosmopolitanism as socio-cultural condition” suggests at least two readings.

On the one hand, one can see cosmopolitanism as a more or less complete socio-
cultural formation to be understood on the societal level. This is, I think, the way it is

² Apart from Pearl S. Buck, who was born in 1892, and William Gardner Smith, born in 1927, all of the authors under consideration were born in the first decade of the twentieth century and lived at least until the 1960s.
understood by Vertovec and Cohen. On the other hand, one can also ask which general socio-cultural conditions help promote (or hinder) individual cosmopolitan developments. As we will see, socio-cultural conditions considered by many to be particularly “cosmopolitan” do not always and necessarily serve as good breeding grounds for cosmopolitan individuals. The example of the United States exemplifies this difficulty particularly well.

Visiting the United States in the 1830s, the French political thinker Alexis de Tocqueville quickly became convinced that what he saw developing in the New World was nothing less than a new type of human being. Understanding the United States as a grand-scale social experiment, Tocqueville described American civilization in a letter to his friend Earnest de Chabrol by asking that latter to imagine a society composed of “people having different languages, beliefs, opinions: in a word, a society without roots, without memories, without prejudices, without routines, without common ideas, without a national character, yet a hundred times happier than our own.”³ In many ways, this sounds exactly like a “modern” and therefore cosmopolitan society: an amalgam of many nations and many cultures, produced first by displacement and then through cultural interpenetration within a newly built national framework.

Tocqueville was hardly the only one to see the United States in this way. In the early 20th century, both Pragmatist and educational reformer John Dewey and Jewish-American philosopher Horace Kallen discerned a fundamental cosmopolitanism in the American cultural formation, and strongly advocated cultural pluralism in the United

States. The thinker who is perhaps best known for his cosmopolitan view of American society, however, is one of Dewey’s students, the public intellectual Randolph S. Bourne. In a 1916 essay on “Trans-National America,” Bourne argues that, instead of forcing immigrants to assimilate to Anglo-Saxon culture, the U.S. should embrace the cultural diversity of those new to its shores, and thus create what he calls a “cosmopolitan America.”

The United States, Bourne insists, “is already the world-federation in miniature, the continent where for the first time in history has been achieved that miracle of hope, the peaceful living side by side, with character substantially preserved, of the most heterogeneous peoples under the sun.” In Bourne’s view, “it is for the American of the younger generation to accept this cosmopolitanism” of a United States that is

not a nationality but a transnationality, a weaving back and forth, with the other lands, of many threads of all sizes and colors. Any movement which attempts to thwart this weaving, or to dye the fabric any one color, or disentangle the threads of the strands, is false to this cosmopolitan vision. . . . Let us make something of this trans-national spirit instead of outlawing it. Already we are living this cosmopolitan America.

Bourne’s vision of an (already existing) cosmopolitan American society has been highly influential in the shaping of American liberalism and multiculturalism, leaving its traces not only in the non-fiction of such writers as Pearl S. Buck—the focus of
chapter 6 of this dissertation—but also in the work of contemporary political thinkers like Michael Walzer and David Hollinger.

Michael Walzer takes up the idea of an (internally) cosmopolitan—or at least multicultural—American society in his *What It Means to Be an American* (1996). The United States, Walzer writes, “took shape as a ‘nation of nationalities,’” and has become “a political nation of cultural nationalities” with a “singular citizenship and [a] pluralized culture” (Walzer 9, 11). Americans, according to Walzer, expand their solidarity (unlike individual European countries) “by taking new nations into their state (Slavs, Italians, and Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Hispanics and Asians today),” which constantly produces “new, hyphenated identities (Asian-American) in place of the old singularities” (15). The U.S. is therefore, in Walzer’s view, “not most importantly a union of states but of nations, races, and religions, all of them dispersed and inter-mixed, without ground of their own” (15).

David Hollinger, who has written extensively on Randolph Bourne’s vision of a cosmopolitan America, similarly emphasizes the “transethnic character” of the civic American nation-state, which has “much to recommend it,” in his *Postethnic America* (1995, 14). In the idea of a post-ethnic America, Hollinger discerns a “cosmopolitan-

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8 Walzer makes offers an interesting distinction between American and European ways of expansion and integration. While Americans expand their solidarity by taking new nations into their state, “Europeans are more likely to expand their solidarity by forming economic unions or political federations with other nation-states. In the first case, the politics of difference produces new, hyphenated identities (Asian-American) in place of the old singularities. In the second, it produces a new singular identity (European, say) alongside and in addition to the old one” (15). The fundamental difference between U.S. and European societies is thus, in Walzer’s view, that European societies are “territorially grounded (‘tribal’),” while American society consists of “groundless (‘multicultural’) difference” (15).
inspired step beyond multiculturalism” (4). In certain ways, then, one could conclude—and many have done so—that the United States, as an ethnically, racially and religiously diverse immigration country, is an inherently cosmopolitan socio-cultural formation, created out of prolonged and ongoing social and cultural interpenetration. One could further conclude that this exemplary cosmopolitan socio-cultural formation would not only continue to produce (at least internally) “cosmopolitan” subjects, but also facilitate transnational cosmopolitan developments that form solidarities and commitments beyond the confines of the American nation.

This conclusion is indeed quite tempting, especially if one develops the Stoic notion of concentric circles in the direction that Michael McConnell suggests in “Don’t Neglect the Little Platoons” (1996). Drawing on the writings of Edmund Burke in his answer to Martha Nussbaum’s “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism,” McConnell explains that “human affections begin close to home; wider circles of

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9 Hollinger maintains, in his essay on “The New Cosmopolitans,” that “the unruly character of the American demographic history is most visible in the extraordinary amount of ethno-racial mixing found in the United States of America. Descendants of the immigrant groups of the great European migration of 1880-1924 intermarried extensively with one another and with the descendents of old-stock Anglo-Protestants” (2002, 236). Later in the texts, Hollinger acknowledges that “the African-American group has been more continuous and more sharply separate from other groups than have other communities of descent within the United States of America. African-Americans reported an outmarriage rate of only about 6 percent in 1990” (237).

10 Benjamin Barber, for example, claims in “Conditional Faith”—his contribution to Nussbaum’s For Love of Country?—that “American national identity has from the start been a remarkable mixture of cosmopolitanism and parochialism” (31), and emphasizes the continuing “American commitment to cosmopolitan ideals” (33).

11 The Stoic concept of concentric circles, Nussbaum explains in “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism” allows the world citizen to retain local identifications, suggesting that we imagine ourselves surrounded by a series of concentric circles. While the smallest circle contains only the self, the next takes in family, and then friends, local groups, fellow townsmen, countrymen etc. Nussbaum quotes the Stoic philosopher Hiercoles, who maintained that world citizens are supposed to “draw the circles somehow toward the center” making thereby everybody part of their immediate concern (Hiercoles quoted in Nussbaum 1996, 9).
affection grow out of, and are dependent upon, the closer and more natural ties” (79). In McConnell’s view, we learn to care for non-citizens and other Others only after we have passed the necessary pre-stages of learning to care for parents, for extended family, for neighbors, church, and nation. Once we have learned to love our nation, the argument runs, we are ready to make the step to the outermost circle and will quasi-automatically (“naturally”) learn to care for individual people and their concerns outside of the nation as well.

I will take up the issue of patriotism implicit in this statement in the next section, but want to stay for now with the question of whether a well-developed concern for the American nation leads indeed, as McConnell asserts, quasi-automatically to more cosmopolitan aspirations. The dilemma with this kind of argument becomes apparent only a few paragraphs later in McConnell’s essay. “What better models of cosmopolitan virtue can we find for our children,” he asks, “than those we celebrate in our public holidays, whether Washington or Lincoln or King? The particular pride of being an American is based on self-evident truths of universal application and in the appropriation of parts of the cultures of peoples, our ancestors, from every corner of the globe” (83, my emphases). Here, the cosmopolitan vision has become a gaze down from the city on the hill, and American cosmopolitanism has become indistinguishable from American exceptionalism. This conflation is, in my opinion, facilitated

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12 There is, by the way, an unconsidered privileging of ‘naturalness’ here that seems a little absurd, given what theorists such as Arlie Hochschild and Erving Goffman, among many others, have told us about the social construction of emotion.
13 George Washington, for example, was hardly noted for his tendency to think and feel beyond the American nation; if cosmopolitanism should indeed develop ‘naturally’ out of patriotism, as McConnell suggests, Washington would appear to have been a little developmentally disabled.
and even promoted by American history and culture, which is why I will argue in the following that, rather than furthering individual cosmopolitan development, the American socio-cultural formation actually tends to hinder such development. One of the most important factors in this hindrance is, as I have already mentioned, the long tradition of American exceptionalism: the deep belief that the United States’ unique origins and historical development make it different from—and, ultimately, better than—all other nations.14

In addition to denoting the distinctiveness of the American social formation, the term “American exceptionalism” worked and continues to work in a religious register as well. Most prominently, it has come to contain the idea, outlined in John Winthrop’s “A Modell of Christian Charity” (1630),15 that the United States was in fact unique, superior, and chosen by God as an example and model—a “city upon a hill”—for the rest of the world.16 A belief in American exceptionalism has gone hand in historical hand with the idea of Manifest Destiny, a concept introduced by Jacksonian Democrats in the 1840s to promote and justify American westward expansion, but which traces its very uncosmopolitan roots at least as far back as John Jay's

14 In Democracy in America (1834), Tocqueville famously argues that the U.S. was different from European nations in that it offered an equality of social conditions unknown and impossible in the Old World, along with an enormous amount of available land for all, both of which had direct implications for American attitudes towards ‘elites.’ Tocqueville discerns five core values in American society: liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism and laissez-faire. Another, related American trait observed by Tocqueville was a very un-European attitude towards money-making.
16 Social Scientist Dorothy Ross argues in Origins of American Social Science (1991) that American exceptionalism can rest on three different explanations: (a) supernaturalist explanations, which stress that America was chosen by God to be a “city on a hill,” (b) genetic explanations, which emphasize ethnicity and race, and (c) environmental explanations, which locate American exceptionalism in the unique geography and climate of the U.S., as well as in social, economic and political structure. Dorothy Ross. Origins of American Social Science. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
Manifest Destiny expressed the belief that the United States is destined to expand from the East Coast to the Pacific Ocean, and it has—after the breaching of the western frontier—also been utilized to support territorial acquisitions outside of North America. This is why geographer Yi-Fu Tuan calls Manifest Destiny a “frankly political-imperial view” (79), one that has provided justification for both military interventions/annexations and missionary ambitions. The world beyond U.S. borders, Tuan maintains in *Cosmos & Hearth* (1996), was seen “as a missionary field” in both the metaphorical and literal sense, a point to which I will return in chapter 6, when I discuss Pearl S. Buck. While supporting American expansion and cultural intervention, however, both Manifest Destiny and American exceptionalism have also been associated with the American tendency to reject international interference in domestic affairs and to feel only loosely bound by international law. The deep suspicion toward international interference in American matters is of course also rooted in another, similarly long tradition: American isolationism.

Already the very first president of the nation, George Washington, admonished his fellow countrymen “to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world,” and a reluctance to become engaged in foreign affairs has prevailed

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17 In making the case for a strong federal government, Jay writes, “With equal pleasure I have as often taken notice that Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country to one united people—a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, [and] very similar in their manners and customs.” John Jay, “No. 2: Concerning Dangers from Foreign Force and Influence.” *The Federalist Papers.* New York: Signet Classic, 2003, pp. 32.

18 Historian Anders Stephanson suggests that, in the idea of Manifest Destiny, “visions of the United States as a sacred space providentially selected for divine purposes found a counterpart in the secular idea of the new nation of liberty as a privileged ‘stage’ (to use a popular metaphor of the time) for the exhibition of a new world order, a great ‘experiment’ for the benefit of humankind as a whole” (Stephanson 5).
American international politics have continuously oscillated back and forth between an isolationist, protective stance, and one that tended towards more openness and allowed for intervention in global affairs. With the beginning of the Cold War struggle between the U.S. and the Soviet Union in the late 1940s, the “American Way of Life” was fiercely protected against non-American influences and at the same time displayed to the world public as a propaganda tool against Soviet expansion. American policy in these uncertain times needed to be “a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies,” wrote American diplomat and Soviet expert George Kennan in 1947. Kennan's policy recommendations helped foster a ‘politics of containment,’ which would soon produce elaborate new systems of surveillance and social control. In such a socio-political climate of suspicion, any interest in ideologies considered foreign and un-American—such as, for example, Marxism and Socialism—was likely to be interpreted as an act of treason. Being an American, as political sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset reminds us, has always been “an ideological commitment. . . . Those who reject American values are un-American” (3). In concert with American exceptionalism and the considerable economic and military power that the U.S. developed in the course of the


20 In 1823, the Monroe Doctrine stated that European countries had to keep out of the newly independent United States of America, and that the U.S. in turn would stay neutral if European countries were at war with each other or with their colonies. The U.S. did, though, intervene in WWI after Germany had repeatedly attacked American battleships. In the aftermath of WWI, the U.S. international policy displayed again a strong tendency towards isolationism, expressed not only in political decision but also in the fields of trade and immigration. Such attempts to avoid foreign interference in domestic affairs, however, did not last, especially not after 1941, prevent the U.S. from acting on the international stage, particularly in Europe and Asia.

20th century, such an ideological stance almost inevitably led to a certain national arrogance.22 And while, as Anthony Smith has shown in The Ethnic Origin of Nations (1986), all nations tend to generate ethnocentrism and a certain notion of collective uniqueness—and all therefore have some sort of built-in resistance to cosmopolitanism—the United States, as Yi-Fu Tuan puts it, “has been outstandingly ethnocentric, full of confidence in its own superiority” (Tuan 73). To be cosmopolitan in the sense of building transnational and transracial solidarities and engagement—and in the sense of valuing other attachments at least as highly as or perhaps more highly than one’s Americanness—tended to be understood, especially during the mid-twentieth century, as inherently unpatriotic, a lack of appreciation for the fortunate fact of one’s having been born an American.

The American ideological climate during much of the 20th century, I would therefore argue, was actively discouraging of individual cosmopolitanism projects bound to transcend the physical and ideological boundaries of the American nation. At the same time, however—and I will flesh out this central claim in its individual applications in each of the following chapters—the stark inequalities and social tensions within American society opened up possibilities for cosmopolitan development for those who were not fully incorporated in the American national project. Prominent among these inequalities and tensions have been gender discrimination against

22 Senator J. William Fulbright, who helped in initiating both the United Nations and the Fulbright Program for international academic exchange, comments on this kind of arrogance in his tellingly entitled The Arrogance of Power (1966). In the book, he argues that the U.S., with its matchless military power, displayed imperial attitudes comparable to those held by ancient empires like Rome or Great Britain at the height of its power in the 19th century. Fulbright criticizes sharply the unilateralist and isolationist stance of American international politics, warning his people and government about the long-term consequences of such a stance.
women, sexual discrimination against “deviant” sexualities, and racial discrimination against African Americans and other dark-skinned minorities. David Hollinger points out in “The New Cosmopolitans” that “the continuity and degree of separation of the black people as a group have been heavily influenced, historically, by the manifest refusal of the whites to accept black people as equals, by the outlawing of black-white marriages in many states until 1967, and by the one-drop-rule developed by the white slaveholders and segregationists” (237); and feminist and queer readings of culture have discerned similar patterns—though of course differently manifested—of marginalization of women and homosexuals.

All of the four authors I am discussing here were marginalized and discriminated against in U.S. society—be it for reasons of race, gender, or cultural Otherness. In all four cases this experience of insider-outsiderness to American society initiated a trajectory that over time led to an increased worldliness and intercultural understanding and interest. All of these authors, also, however, nevertheless maintained highly ambiguous relationships with American exceptionalism, remaining deeply entangled in its affective web but at the same time reacting forcefully against it on the basis of both rational and emotional ethical commitments. Because, then, these

23 While I am stressing the ways in which underprivileged Americans might have been at a certain advantage for developing cosmopolitan, non-U.S.-centric visions during the twentieth century, I am not denying the fact that particularly privileged social positions do have a tendency to facilitate cultural cosmopolitanism in the sense of moving easily among diverse cultures. This kind of cosmopolitanism, however, also often fails to produce the kind of altered understanding and engagement I am interested in, precisely because such easy moving among cultures tends to take place in realms marked by privilege (such as 5-star hotels and private residences). That cultural cosmopolitanism nevertheless can also lead to a substantial reconsideration of one’s own vision of one’s country as well as the rest of the world, and thus lead to a genuine interest in and an engagement on behalf of others, however, is not denied here. In such cases, though, I would argue that cultural distance, and other otherings of the self, help create a space from which a new vision can be developed.
authors are not only socially constructed subjects but also self-constructing individuals, I am interested not only in the socio-cultural and economic conditions that enabled or hindered their cosmopolitan developments, but also in the philosophical ideas that promote and inform them.

**Worldly Minds: Cosmopolitanism, Patriotism and Sentiment**

Generally, proponents of cosmopolitan philosophy believe in one way or another in a single, worldwide community of humanity. The ultimate units of concern in this community are individual human beings, regardless of their race, religion, nationality or other distinguishing features. As Thomas Pogge has suggested in his 1992 essay “Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty,” we can distinguish between *legal* cosmopolitanism, which “is committed to a concrete political idea of a global order under which all persons have equivalent legal rights and duties” (as we find, for example, in the work of Seyla Benhabib), and *moral* cosmopolitanism, which holds “that every human being has a global stature as an ultimate unit of moral concern” (Pogge 49; examples are Martha Nussbaum’s work on cosmopolitanism and Kwame Anthony Appiah’s recent book on the topic). It is hardly a great leap to suggest that legal cosmopolitanism rests on moral or ethical foundations, which is why in the end both seem to come back to the question of how much we *must* care and/or do for our “compatriots” and for our nation, and how much we *can care* and/or do for non-citizens and other Others. In this context, national as well as transnational feelings—including emotions such as love, pride, shame, anger, disappointment, sympathy,
compassion and belonging—tend to play a major role in a person’s cosmopolitan deliberations. How people feel about their home country and its people, and how they feel about their host countries and their people, clearly seems to have a significant influence on the way they think about them, and vice versa. This, in turn, is likely to lead to particular engagements and actions that themselves impact ways of feeling and thinking. That is, a complex trilectical relationship exists between feeling, thinking and acting beyond the nation.

Since, as I have outlined above, American nationalist ideology has cast a particularly strong spell over the thoughts and feelings of its subjects, we are faced with the question of to what extent patriotism and nationalism can coexist with an honestly thought and felt cosmopolitanism. World citizen Garry Davis would probably argue that no form of national pride or patriotism works well with a cosmopolitan outlook. His own cosmopolitanism is, after all, predicated on the total rejection of any affiliation with the nation-state (or the nation). We might recall that Davis sees “only division, aggressiveness, fear and . . . terrible consequences” when looking at the American flag (24). Contemporary cosmopolitan philosophers, however, are generally much less radical with regard to patriotic feelings. They often emphasize, as, for example, does Anthony Appiah in an essay entitled “Cosmopolitan Patriots,” that “the cosmopolitan patriot can entertain the possibility of a world in which everyone is a rooted cosmopolitan, attached to a home of his or her own . . . but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different people” (Appiah

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24 Appiah’s essay was initially published in Nussbaum’s For Love of Country (1996), and then republished—in a revised and extended version—in Robbins and Cheah’s Cosmopolitics (1998). I will be quoting from the longer, 1998, version.
1998, 91). While Appiah’s attitude here seems to speak largely to a cultural or aesthetic cosmopolitanism—an attitude that is difficult to distinguish from many versions of multiculturalism—he expresses a notion that is widely shared by those theorists who advocate what they call, like Appiah, a “rooted cosmopolitanism.” There is nothing wrong, they say, with loving and being proud of the place we are from, as long as we are also able to enjoy other places and people on their own terms, and are willing to accept that they love their home countries as much we love ours. This “rooted cosmopolitan”—who, according to Appiah, “accept[s] the responsibility to nurture the culture and politics of [his] home” (1998, 92; my emphasis)—is often set in opposition to the aimlessly wandering figure of the rootless cosmopolitan, a radically independent being who has no home, no attachments, and no real purpose or responsibility in life.25 Worse still, this latter pays neither his democratic dues nor his taxes.

This specter of undemocratic, irresponsible and egocentric world citizenship is of course closely related to the Cynic concept. Diogenes, after all, proclaimed that he owed no special obligations to Sinope, Athens, or any other polis. And, nevertheless, he lived in the streets of Athens, being sustained (in an ever so minimal way) by a citizenry he did not support. Such a “parasitic” existence was disagreeable to many proper Athenian citizens (which might have resulted partially from the fact that Diogenes also did not feel himself above stealing from the rich and urinating on those who displeased him). If we further trace the career of “rootless” cosmopolitanism throughout history, we find that it often adhered to unwanted or possibly disruptive subjects.

While Stalin famously used the term “rootless cosmopolitans” to denounce members of the Jewish diaspora (which is, of course, anything but rootless), the idea of the Wandering Jew and the challenge or even threat that she poses to the well-ordered (ethnocentric) society has emerged in many other contexts.²⁶

While contemporary writing rarely connects the figure of the “rootless cosmopolitan” with particular racial or ethnic groups (such groups are instead understood as belonging to global diasporas that are the opposite of rootless, even if they are not necessarily rooted in particular nation-states), such writing nevertheless often posits the rootless cosmopolitan as an undesirable person. Advocates of “rooted cosmopolitanism” often point, as I have mentioned above, to the “sociopathic” quality of rootless cosmopolitanism. They argue that it is natural and healthy for human beings to be emotionally attached to their homes, families and friends in ways that they cannot be attached to foreign places or to strangers.²⁷

Generally, these theorists take their cue from Stoic thinking rather than from Cynic, offering a cosmopolitanism that allows for special and multiple attachments—and rejects fearfully distancing and detachment.²⁸

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²⁶ The figure of the “Wandering Jew” originated in medieval Christian folklore, and began to spread throughout Europe in the thirteenth century, becoming a stock character of Christian mythology. It has been a prominent literary character as well through the ages. A brief selection of examples ranges from Eugene Sue’s *Juif Errant* (1844) and Paul Féval’s *La Fille du Juif Errant* (1864) up to James Joyce’s *Leopold Bloom* (1922) and to Felix Volkbein in Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood* (1936). Hitler’s equivalent of the Wandering Jew (and that of the Nazis in general) is “Der Ewige Jude” (the eternal Jew). In 1940, Goebbels (in close cooperation with Hitler) had Fritz Hippler direct a “documentary” film by that title, which basically denounced its Jewish characters as wandering cultural parasites.

²⁷ I wonder, however, whether we might view the society that discourages close external attachments as itself sociopathic within the broader community of humankind.

²⁸ Ross Poole emphasizes, for example, that “there need be no inconsistency between affirming the cosmopolitan ideal and also recognizing the importance of particular attachments and the commitments they carry with them” (Poole 156). This clearly harks back to the Stoic view that one can have special attachments and a concern for humanity as such at the same time. While I do not in the least take issue with Stoic cosmopolitanism, generally speaking, I will later challenge the easy dichotomy some theorists have discerned between this and Cynic cosmopolitanism.
Some of the theorists (though by no means all) who emphasize this necessity for emotional and spiritual rootedness equate it, as Appiah does, with a need for and a right to patriotism. Kok-Chor Tan, for example, in his defense of cosmopolitanism, assumes what he considers “the commonsense moral view that patriotism is an important feature of our social world” (140, my emphasis), and attempts to reconcile patriotism with cosmopolitanism, showing us, like Appiah, that we can and perhaps even must practice both at the same time. The “commonsensical-ness” of patriotism as a “moral view,” it seems to me, offers rather thin theoretical justification for a worldview that we know to be, in many cases, motivated by marketing efforts. There have been no shortage of historical, “commonsense” views that relied heavily on ideologically supported prejudices—such as, for example, the Kantian view that “humanity achieves its greatest perfection with the white race”—and were thus in dire need of revision, especially from a cosmopolitan point of view. The jury on the question of how much and, indeed, whether human beings emotionally need patriotic attachments to nations is very much still out.

There are those theorists, however, who argue that it is not so much people who “need” patriotism, but democracies. Charles Taylor, for example, argues along such lines, and thus speaks for a reconciliation of cosmopolitanism with patriotism. “Democratic participation,” he argues, “requires not only a commitment to the common project, but also a special sense of bonding among the people working together” (Taylor 120). This is, he explains, why we need both patriotism and cosmopolitanism, and why we all need to be both patriots and cosmopolitans. Taylor
may or may not be correct in his belief that “patriotic” attachments are necessary for the functioning of a democratic state, but there can be little doubt that the equation works in reverse—that participation in a democratic state will itself produce some level of emotional attachment. That is, it is difficult to know whether bonding is necessary for democratic participation precisely because democratic participation induces the form of bonding Taylor supposes it to require as a precondition. In this, however, participation in democratic state governance is no different at its core from participation in a union, a church group, or any other formation of civil or political society. That is to say, meaningful participation in, for example, the United Nations or the Pan-African movement might well stimulate precisely the sort of emotional attachment Taylor subsumes under the heading of patriotism. Indeed, in insisting on the importance of personal attachments for group functionality (whether he has the direction of this equation right or not), Taylor might be not too far from Jürgen Habermas’s call for a “constitutional patriotism”: a non-nationalist patriotism that emphasizes shared citizenship in a constitutional state. When it comes so far away from the nation, though, we may reasonably wonder what in fact patriotism is.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines patriotism as “love of or devotion to one’s country,” and the patriot accordingly as “a person who loves his or her country, especially one who is ready to support its freedoms and rights and to defend it against

29 Jürgen Habermas. “Citizenship and National Identity,” Praxis International 12.1 (1992): 1-19. One has to ask the question, however, if in Habermas’s concept, the word ‘patriotism’ is not a poor choice in the first place, since he seems much more concerned with some sort of rational loyalty to a state structure than with an emotional attachment to a nation.
enemies or detractors.”

Such a definition, which stresses the emotional attachment implied by the term, seems to fit well with Appiah’s insistence that “cosmopolitanism and patriotism, unlike nationalism, are sentiments more than ideologies” (1998, 92). Appiah also gives examples for such non-ideological patriotic sentiments that are worth quoting in whole:

If there is one emotion that the word brings to mind, it is surely pride. When the national anthem plays, when the national team wins, when the national army prevails, there is that shiver down the spine, the electric excitement, the thrill of being on the winning side. But the patriot is surely also the first to suffer his or her country’s shame. (1998, 95)

The fact that Appiah’s “patriotic sentiments” are triggered by national anthems, national sports teams, and national armies raises doubt about how ideology-free these sentiments really are. After all, all three are part of active nation-building and maintenance. And the fact that patriotism finds expression through sentiments—i.e., love, pride and shame—raises more than a little confusion about how it might itself be a sentiment. Is it not, rather, a mode of ideological positioning (if not an ideology itself), a system or structure of feeling occurring somewhere between the level of shared ideology and individually experienced emotion? And if it is an ideological structure, can there be indeed, as Kok-Chor Tan asserts, “a moral significance of patriotism,” an ethical imperative to feel patriotically? It seems remarkable that recognition of the human

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31 Note, please, the distinction between “feeling patriotically” and “feeling patriotic.” The former references a mode of feeling (where “patriotically” modifies the verb “to feel”), not a specific sentiment, and the latter suggests the feeling that one is occupying a state of being that might be described as patriotic. In both cases, “patriotic” denotes a system of significations with which specific
need for emotional attachments, and the commitments they carry with them, gets so often and so easily transferred into the double claim that the “love of country” and a feeling of pride for one’s fatherland are human necessities, and that empathy and solidarity beyond that fatherland are against human nature.

Bruce Robbins has challenged this notion repeatedly, and, I believe, successfully. In “The Weird Heights of Cosmopolitanism,” he takes up Benedict Anderson’s famous claim that nations are “imagined communities” that develop a “deep, horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 16), explaining that “if [national] culture is the domain of feeling, then for Anderson there is no culture of cosmopolitanism, only an elegant, decorous absence of feeling” (Robbins 1996, 174, my emphasis). This, however, Robbins continues,

does not in fact follow from Anderson's premises. Feelings are produced within a bounded administrative unit on a national scale, but it is not the bounds themselves that do the affective producing; surely, the same sorts of feeling are also produced . . . by the sort of connections now increasingly common on a transnational scale. If people can get as emotional as Anderson says they do about relations with fellow nationals they never see face-to-face [Anderson 15], then why not with those who are not fellow nationals, people bound by some other sort of fellowship? . . . Why is it, that Martha Nussbaum is forced to affirm so energetically that 'the life of the cosmopolitan . . . need not be boring, flat, or lacking in love?’” (1996, 174-75)

These are excellent and crucial questions that point in two important directions: first, that it is more than doubtful that our sentiments have to be, or indeed ever are, automatically or quasi-naturally bounded by national borders; and, second, that we should rather turn our attention to the question of what exactly it is that keeps—or at least sentiments are associated—pride, love, shame, etc.—none of which might be called simply “the feeling of patriotism.”
attempts to keep—our sentiments confined within those borders. Underlying these questions, however, seem to be three more basic ones: what kind of emotional attachments do human beings actually need? What relation do our feelings bear to our thinking and to our (nationalist, patriotic or cosmopolitan) attitudes? How do our thoughts, feelings and attitudes influence our (nationalist, patriotic and cosmopolitan) engagements and actions—and vice versa?

Robbins is, as is apparent in the title choices for two of his more recent treatments of cosmopolitanism—the influential essay collection *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation* (1998, ed. with Pheng Cheah), and *Feeling Global: Internationalism in Distress* (1999)—well aware that cosmopolitanism is a matter of both thinking and feeling. In the introduction to *Feeling Global*, he argues that “cosmopolitanism or internationalism cannot pretend to embody the interests of humanity itself or of universal reason; hence the word *feeling* in my title” (1999, 6). Robbins seems to suggest here that, with “feeling,” something more idiosyncratic and affective makes its way into our cosmopolitanism(s).32 While agreeing with Robbins that individual “feelings” play an important role in our cosmopolitan developments, I would like to further suggest that we understand “feelings” and “emotions” as Martha Nussbaum has outlined them in her 2001 *Upheavals of Thought: the Intelligence of Em-

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32 Specifically, he seems here to refer to Raymond Williams’s notion of the “structures of feeling.” Structures of feeling, for Williams, are values and meanings as they are actively lived and felt. “We are talking about characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone,” writes Williams in *Marxism and Literature*, “specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and inter-relating continuity” (132). Structures of feeling are, for Williams, an affective response to conditions before they are manifest as a system that can be analyzed and understood rationally. Though I will not be drawing specifically on Williams, my treatment of Martha Nussbaum’s “structures of emotions” does share certain aspects with William’s notion; for example an understanding of “thought as felt and feeling as thought,” which seems to suggest a codependence of emotions and thought.
otions. Here, Nussbaum seems to offer a different spin on her earlier assertion, in “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism,” that cosmopolitanism entails a mixture of “reason and the love of humanity” (Nussbaum 1996, 15). In that earlier text, she seemed to posit emotion as existing in opposition (and addition) to rational thinking.  

In *Upheavals of Thought*, however, emotions are not understood as the irrational Other of rational thought. Rather, Nussbaum takes what she calls a “cognitive-evaluative view” of emotions, arguing that emotions are nothing less than “essential elements of human intelligence” (2). “Emotions are value judgments” (4), she explains, and thus tend to evaluate as good or bad, beneficial or threatening, those occurrences and people perceived to have importance for our own well-being. “What distinguishes fear from hope, joy from grief, love from hate,” Nussbaum explains, “is not so much the identity of the object, which might not change, but the way in which the object is seen” (28). The object, that is, can stay exactly the same; if we change our mind about how important that person is to our own well-being, and how likely it is that she will either help or hurt us, we will develop different feelings about her. Once we start feeling different (more fearful, aggressive, or loving), however, our thinking about that person gets in turn influenced by our feelings, and we start interpreting certain words or actions differently. This, in turn, can lead to again different, and perhaps stronger, emotions. In this sense, emotion itself functions as a mode of cognition.

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33 Nussbaum has been routinely critiqued for her reliance on (universal) reason in “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism,” not least by many of her respondents in *For Love of Country*.
34 By which she means “nothing more than ‘concerned with receiving and processing information’” (2001, 23).
35 The same is true, of course true for events, social developments, foreign nations and world-views.
36 Yi-Fu Tuan seems to be thinking along Nussbaum’s lines when he maintains that what is desirable—in cosmopolitan development and elsewhere—“is not just a level of emotion, but a quality of emotion.
An additional difficulty in this complex interplay of emotions and thinking is created by, as Nussbaum puts it, “the role of diverse social norms in constructing a society’s [and by extension a person’s] emotional repertory” (6). What sociologists and psychologists have described as the “social construction of emotion, Nussbaum claims, plays into our individual mental lives as much as do our idiosyncratic childhood experiences (6). However, while acknowledging that “culture provides a crucial part of the explanation for an individual’s emotions,” Nussbaum stresses that social constructivists’ assumption that “cultural forces leave no room for individual variety and freedom” goes too far (156). This is, she argues, why the cognitive/evaluative view of emotions that she herself offers is at a great advantage: because “it shows us where societies and individuals have the freedom to make improvements. If we recognize the element of evaluation in the emotions, we also see that they can themselves be evaluated—and in some ways altered, if they fail to survive criticism” (2001, 172-3). Nussbaum asserts here that we as individuals can and will change our emotions—even socially induced ones—once they cannot stand up to the criticisms that we levy as a result of a changed understanding. For the developing cosmopolitan, this would mean a shift in emotional attachments, from a country or nation to some

And that quality is, to a far larger degree than we realize, a product of reflective and imaginative thinking” (1996, 164). Both Nussbaum and Tuan stress that emotions, and/or the quality of emotions, are dependent on how we (reflectively and imaginatively) think about things; and Nussbaum, additionally, asserts that emotions in turn also influence the ways in which we think about certain people or issues. See, for example, Jonathan Turner, On the Origins of Human Emotions: A Sociological Inquiry into the Evolution of Human Affect. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000; and Rom Harré and W. Gerrod Parrott, eds. The Emotions: Social, Cultural, and Biological Dimensions. London: Sage, 1996. See also Ian Burkitt. Social Selves. London: Sage, 2003.
other community, as a result of the insight that this might be a better choice.\textsuperscript{38} It is important to note here, however, and this is a point I will address in greater detail later on, that this understanding relies heavily on a notion of the presumptive cosmopolitan as an \textit{individual}, having the freedom to transcend socially determined emotions through the use of reason to understand that determination.

I am laying so much emphasis here on emotional development and on the possibilities for such development for three reasons. The first is of a more generally theoretical nature, while the second and third relate directly to the authors I will examine in the following chapters. First, then, it would seem that feelings of belonging and empathy as they transgress parochial or national concerns lie at the heart of the cosmopolitan project—this, at least, is a point of commonality among a number of theorists.\textsuperscript{39} Craig Calhoun, for example, while reminding us of the problematic Eurocentric and elitist baggage of the concept, notes that there might nonetheless be value in it, since there are “a variety of ways in which people are joined to each other, within and across the boundaries of states and other polities.” This is why, in his view, “theorists of cosmopolitan democracy are right to stress the multiplicity of connections” (99). But we need to find out more about those connections, Calhoun insists; we need to understand what exactly it is that binds people to each other, and to foster those binding agents.

\textsuperscript{38} Similarly important for the individual cosmopolitan project (which is not Nussbaum’s concern in this particular work), is Nussbaum’s contention that, despite differences in social norms and emotional taxonomies, there is always enough overlap between different societies and cultures to enable cross-cultural emotional translation and understanding (173).

“If hopes for cosmopolitan democracy are to be realized,” he claims, “they depend on developing more social solidarity” (100). Social solidarity across national and other borders is, it seems, an indispensable component of any sincere cosmopolitanism. But how can we build such solidarity? What is it, indeed, that binds people to one another?

Part of this answer is political, and is being addressed by political scientists like Seyla Benhabib and David Held, as well as by feminists such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Jacqui Alexander. These latter thinkers call for a praxis-oriented, transnational, antiracist, anticapitalist, feminist democracy, and define solidarity “in terms of mutuality, accountability, and the recognition of common interests as the basis for relationships among diverse communities” (Mohanty 7). Feminists, they argue, if they take themselves seriously, cannot help but form antiocolonial, anticapitalist allegiances, because the “oppressive practices and values of capitalist domination” are intrinsically anti-feminist (Mohanty and Alexander xxxiii). The same is true, I think, of cosmopolitanism, for the very same reasons. Like transnational feminism, and in cooperation with it, cosmopolitanism needs to form transnational, transracial, transgender and transcultural solidarities, critique global capitalism, and deal realistically and practically with existing problems and inequalities. The crucial contribution of its

40 “Rather than assuming an enforced commonality of oppression,” Mohanty writes in Feminism without Borders (2003), “the practice of solidarity foregrounds communities of people who have chosen to work and fight together” (7). Beyond her scholarly engagement, Mohanty’s interest in praxis translates, for example, into her engagement in the Executive Board of Grassroots Leadership of North Carolina, and in the Advisory Boards of the Center for Immigrant Families and of Awareness, in Orissa, India. It is precisely this sort of continuity between theory and praxis that I will be exploring in the lives and works of “my” authors.

“Rather than assuming an enforced commonality of oppression,” Mohanty writes in Feminism without Borders (2003), “the practice of solidarity foregrounds communities of people who have chosen to work and fight together” (7).
problematically valuable heritage is that it calls on us never to lose sight of the utopian ideal of global social and environmental justice and equality.

Many of the theorists of a more political cosmopolitanism focus on issues of “cosmopolitan justice,” and seek to leave emotional ties largely out of the picture.\textsuperscript{41} Others, however—and I include myself in this group—suspect that it might also be necessary to better understand not only what binds people together in the first place, but also what allows them to extend their emotional attachments and their capacity for empathy beyond their immediate personal concerns and beyond their nations. And, in fact, extended emotional engagements might well be crucial to the creation of a more equal world order. “To get the haves mobilized behind a significant transfer of resources to the have-nots,” Bruce Robbins insists in \textit{Feeling Global}, “you need more than even a cosmopolitan extension of decorous constitutionalism. You need something like religious fervor” (153). In thinking of religious fervor, then, it seems quite helpful to keep in mind the idea that strong beliefs and passions form a part of people’s cognition. These emotions help us to evaluate our commitments to others in a non-legalistic framework even as they themselves remain susceptible to reason and to understandings that may be changed by experience.

The second reason why I emphasize the significance of emotion in the cosmopolitan project is simply because it was so very important for the American authors I

\textsuperscript{41} The dominant figure for this line of thought is John Rawls and the social contract theory outlined in his \textit{A Theory of Justice} (1971). Rawls’s liberal thought remains the focus of debate for many. Martha Nussbaum and other cosmopolitan thinkers, however, take issue with Rawls’s confinement of justice to the nation-state, and have argued that we must expand our understanding of justice beyond that limited arena. Nussbaum, it should perhaps be mentioned, takes issue with Rawls’s view on justice not only because of his limiting of rights to the nation state, but also for his general avoidance of issues of poverty, animal rights, and disability when discussing the Social Contract.
am considering. Two of them, Kay Boyle and Peal S. Buck, were repeatedly accused of the greatest crime in the kingdom of modernist fiction: sentimentalism. The two women suffered several very similar critical consequences for their usage of sentimental techniques and tropes, although both were initially hailed as up-and-coming American authors. Pearl Buck received the Nobel Prize, the Pulitzer Price and the Howells Medal for her early work, and Kay Boyle was considered, by no less a personage than the famous *Black Sun Press* owner Harry Crosby, to be “the best girl writer since Jane Austen” (quoted in Spanier 1). After achieving early literary distinction, however, both writers turned to a mode of writing deemed sentimental—perhaps in order to get across their often highly political messages on topics of international concern (Boyle was mostly concerned with fascist and then war-torn Europe, Buck with Asian-American as well as inter-Asian relations). I will turn to the question of in how far this “turn to the sentimental” was a deliberate choice, a choice made in order to reach the masses about urgent political matters, and in how far other issues (such as for example aesthetic or economic concerns) played significant roles, in the respective author chapters. For the moment, we may at least say that Buck’s and Boyle’s choices of topic and technique led to great success with the public (in Buck’s case, even extraordinary success), but at the same time drew disdain from critics inside and outside of academia. This is why I will also, in both cases, turn to the question of whether the “sentimental problem” indeed lay with these two women’s writing itself, or was rather a problem with the dominant and masculinist idea that appeals to emotion typify a debased—read feminine—form of writing.
The two women among my selected writers, however, are not the only ones in whose work emotions figure prominently. Richard Wright’s and William Gardner Smith’s novels are full of anger, hatred, contempt, and—this is much more true for Smith than for Wright—deep (interracial) love and compassion. In Smith's writings the ambiguous human quality of ‘sensitivity’—expressed in both an increased vulnerability and a heightened capacity for empathy—even becomes the central inducement to cosmopolitan development. In one way or another, all four authors’ characters’ communication with, understanding of, and feelings for Others relies on a sort of cognitive dialectic, where emotional developments are constantly interacting with rational deliberations to produce deeper engagements and insights.

The third reason for my concern with emotions and emotional attachments is the ever-changing, conflicted relationship towards the American nation exhibited by all four authors themselves. While all displayed highly critical and sometimes angry attitudes towards the American nation, none became simply anti-American. Rather, each struggled on an ongoing basis to reconcile an emerging cosmopolitanism with a residual national consciousness. Emotional national attachment—and the struggle with it—can be particularly well observed in the life and works of Kay Boyle, Richard Wright and Pearl Buck, and I will pay particular attention to this topic in chapters 3, 4 and 6. In this context, Bruce Robbins’s assertion that cosmopolitanism is not, as Martha Nussbaum claims in “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism,” the opposite of nationalism, but rather “continuous with forms of national feeling” (1999, 6), becomes particularly interesting.
Robbins argues that “cosmopolitanism or internationalism does not take its primary meaning or desirability from an absolute and intrinsic opposition to nationalism. Rather, it is an extension outward of the same sorts of potent and dangerous solidarity” (1999, 6). It is important to stress the difference here between Robbins’s position and, for example, Michael McConnell’s. While this latter imagines that cosmopolitanism will grow quite “naturally” out of nationalist feelings, Robbins sees a lot less nature and a lot more intellectual and emotional work involved. His belief in a kind of *continuum* between nationalist and cosmopolitan solidarities stems from his recognition, quoted earlier in this chapter, that we can conclude from Benedict Anderson’s observations (against Anderson’s own assertions) that the same processes that help people relate to an abstract—and finally unknowable—nation, should also be able to help us extend our attachment to social constructs larger than the nation and its state.\(^{42}\) Given that all of the cosmopolitan Americans in this study do actually display continuity between their domestic and transnational social concerns, and that two of them—Kay Boyle and Pearl Buck—became highly engaged political activists after their returns to the U.S., the proposed continuum between national and transnational feelings will remain a concern throughout this dissertation.

\(^{42}\) As his insistence on the “dangerousness” of such solidarities shows, Robbins is well aware that such emotional attachments—among groups, nations, or beyond—are, because they involve feelings, always in danger of developing dynamics that are counterproductive to cosmopolitan ethics. Nussbaum seems to be similarly aware of these dangers when she speaks of the inherent “messiness” and “ungovernability” of emotions (Nussbaum 2001, 16).
The ‘Who’s and ‘How’s of Cosmopolitanism: What is a World Citizen?

The feelings at stake in cosmopolitanism are just one arena of contention, pointing us toward a larger definitional struggle for the emerging sub-field of cosmopolitan studies. Sociologists Zlatko Skrbis, Gavin Kendall and Ian Woodward claim in their joint article, “Locating Cosmopolitanism” (2004), that one of the pressing issues facing theorists of cosmopolitanism today is a lack of clarity about what or who it is, exactly, that they are theorizing. The problem of identification, they argue, is accompanied by one of attribution.\textsuperscript{43} The question becomes: who is cosmopolitan and how can we define the cosmopolitan disposition? In answer to the first part of this question, the authors single out three populations that have been regularly represented as archetypical cosmopolitans in literature on the topic: global business elites, refugees and expatriates (119).\textsuperscript{44}

The members of the global business elite are “cosmopolitan” in the sense of seeing a lot of the world (albeit from an airport-point-of-view), and of being able—within limits—to navigate different (business) cultures and cuisines. They have a tendency to exhibit what Craig Calhoun has termed “the class consciousness of frequent travelers” (2003, title) and often lack sustained interest in and avoid deep engagement with other cultures.\textsuperscript{45} Skrbis et al. remind us that the members of this group are almost

\textsuperscript{43} Skrbis sees another significant problem in the indeterminacy of cosmopolitanism (too many versions of cosmopolitanism, and too many modifiers).

\textsuperscript{44} Of course, many expatriates are members of the global business elite, and a number of others might count as refugees of a sort. What is useful about this trichotomy, reductive as it may be, is that it helps us distinguish between those putative cosmopolitans who are better poised to develop the solidarity of world citizenship and those who, primarily for structural reasons, are less likely to do so.

\textsuperscript{45} This is not necessarily a comment on the personalities of those in question, as the cultural logic of global capitalism forecloses the possibility of non-instrumental engagement with others. Today’s cosmopolitans, Calhoun argues, and he readily includes himself in this group, all too often “imagine the
invariably “citizens of first-world countries or belong[ing] to the privileged classes from other states whose identification is largely with Western ideals” (120). If the global business elite is at the ‘winning’ end of global citizenship, the second group, refugees and labor migrants, are positioned on the ‘losing’ end. They are, as Pollock et al. have shown, “the victims of modernity, failed by capitalism's upward mobility, and bereft of those comforts and customs of national belonging” (Pollock, 582). In both cases, though, as Skrbis et al. rightly note, the emphasis lies on movement, displacement and intercultural contact, and it is sometimes assumed that dislocation in itself constitutes or produces cosmopolitanism.

Dislocation alone, however, by no means guarantees a cosmopolitan mindset. Multitudes of dislocated people, American and otherwise, never develop anything close to cosmopolitanism in the sense of a transnational, transracial vision of equality, solidarity and empathy. Modern mass tourism, for example, the engine for most dislocation in contemporary American life, involves no such vision. Instead, it succeeds brilliantly in “saming” foreign experiences to the extent that they become different from our habitual home only in terms of the weather and some nicely pre-packaged ‘exotic sights.’ The experience of dislocation without meaningful cultural exchange, and without broad solidarity, is by no means specific to the privileged, however.

world from the vantage point of frequent travelers, easily entering and exiting polities and social relations around the world, armed with visa-friendly passports and credit cards” (90). What is often presented as a view from nowhere is, according to Calhoun, in reality a view from Brussels, Davos or the U.S. university, and Western intellectuals still have a tendency to “treat the West as the site of both capitalist globalization and cosmopolitanism but to approach the rest of the world through the category of tradition” (91).

A somewhat different subsection of this group consists of the global class of academics, who, while showing decidedly more interest and engagement than the business elite in diverse cultures and their fate, nevertheless share the class privilege and mobility that membership in the “global business elite” brings with it.
While experiencing a far more hostile mode of dislocation than tourists, refugees and labour migrants often still retain, as a result of their conditions of dislocation, particularly strong attachments to their home countries, and tend to find engagement with their host countries especially difficult.\footnote{By no means do I want to suggest that this difficulty is a problem that is simply internal to refugee populations. In many or even most cases, refugees and labor migrants experience such deep hostility from their ‘hosts’ as to make goodwilled exchanges and solidarity-building all but impossible.} As Skribs et al. point out, it is quite likely that many of these forcefully dislocated people “may even consciously prefer to stay at home . . . rather than suffering the tragedy of their supposed cosmopolitanism” (120).

With these authors, and with German anthropologist Ulf Hannerz, I argue that cosmopolitan development requires much more than simple displacement.

In “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture” (1990), Ulf Hannerz understands “cosmopolitanism as a perspective, a state of mind, or—to take a more processual view—a mode of managing meaning” (238). He argues that the figure best placed to develop a cosmopolitan perspective is the expatriate: “Expatriates (or ex-expatriates) are people who have chosen to live abroad for some period, and who know when they are there that they can [unlike the refugee or exile] go home when it suits them” (243). As voluntary displaced people, expatriates are, in Hannerz’s eyes, more at ease in foreign surroundings and thus more likely to be curious and open-minded about those surroundings. This, however, does not mean, for Hannerz, that expatriates are \textit{automatically} cosmopolitans. As the gated, fenced, guard-towered and barb-wired compounds of Western expatriates in some less developed countries show, expatriates often live in communities that are deeply parochial and built on a near-absolute refusal to engage with the host culture. Another pertinent example, one I will
return to at the end of this chapter, would be an expatriate artist community such as, for example, the famed “Lost Generation” in 1920s Paris. Routinely referred to as “cosmopolitans,” these groups were often nothing more than long-term tourists: far removed from and disinterested in their host country’s everyday life and problems.

Nonetheless, however, for Hannerz, expatriates have much better starting positions and chances than anybody else to become cosmopolitans.

What a cosmopolitan is, though, remains murky. Skrbis et al. attest to a lot of variation and disagreement in the literature, and deplore the fact that “recent cultural studies literature . . . utilizes cosmopolitanism as an empty signifier that can stand for almost any given reality and aspiration” (117). And even among the well-respected theorists, there is disparity: Hannerz emphasizes cultural openness and mutually dependent relationships with locals. Anthropologist Paul Rabinow suggests that the cosmopolitan has a particularly well-developed awareness of the particularities of places, characters, historical trajectories, and fates (Rabinow 258). For Stuart Hall, it is the “drawing on the traces and residues of many cultural systems, of many ethical systems” that characterizes the cosmopolitan (26). Cosmopolitanism, according to Hall, “means the ability to stand outside of having one’s life written and scripted by any one community, whether that is a faith or tradition or religion or culture—whatever it might be—and to draw selectively on a variety of discursive meanings” (Hall

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48 The “lost generation” is a term traditionally attributed to Gertrude Stein, and later picked up by Hemingway in *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Moveable Feast*, and by Malcolm Cowley in *Exile’s Return* (1932). It refers to the post-WWI generation coming of age in the United States, who were permanently marked by their war experiences.

49 I am borrowing the term “long-term tourists” from Caren Kaplan’s *Questions on Travel* (1996), where she uses it to denote the expatriation mode of the American modernists.
26). Hall agrees in this assessment with political scientist Jeremy Waldron, who asserts that a cosmopolitan is a person who “refuses to think of himself as defined by his location or his ancestry or his citizenship or his language” (755).

While I am sympathetic to most of the definitions and descriptions above, I am more than a little hesitant to subscribe to their logical extreme: what we might see as an Emersonian or Kantian position. In Waldron’s statement that “the cosmopolitan may live all his life in one city and maintain the same citizenship throughout” (755), we hear echoing back to us the murmurs of Kant, developing his cosmopolitan philosophy in the drawing room of the house in Königsberg, the city he never left, and of Emerson, asserting somewhat disingenuously that “the wise man stays at home” (Emerson 277). Kant, after all, might have much profited—personally and academically—from some personal experience with, for example, his “less-talented” “yellow Indians”; and Emerson, it should be remembered, wrote his encomium for imaginary travel only after returning from two extensive European tours. The internal contradictions of the “one-city hypothesis” seem evident. A personal experience of immersion in a foreign culture—and often language—cannot help but suggest new and different perspectives, even as it does not automatically induce cosmopolitanism as such. And such an immersion will be necessary in the development of a fully embodied—and not simply ghostly—cosmopolitanism.

To insist that dislocation—while not the sole condition—is indeed a condition for personal cosmopolitanism, however, is risky for at least two reasons: First, because it might be understood to reaffirm the notion of cosmopolitanism as an elite phenomen-
non. However, as we have seen above, by no means all people experiencing disloca-
tion belong to an elite class. Furthermore, it is important to recall that international 
travel—even when fully voluntary—is itself not necessarily an elite phenomenon, but 
increasingly a question of priorities for many. With an eye to the chapters to come, it 
is perhaps worth mentioning that the person most resembling an elite traveler among 
the four authors I am considering was Richard Wright. At the height of his career, 
Wright could not only afford repeated sea passages for his whole family, but also a 
spacious apartment in Paris. The other three authors, however, had to make do with 
less convenient travel arrangements.

William Gardner Smith, who followed Richard Wright to join the black expat-
riate community in Paris, did so at a much younger age and at a much earlier stage in 
his career. Having grown up in the ghettos of the Philadelphia South Side, he was the 
only, member of his family to travel extensively. And his poverty in France was so 
great that his wife Mary found it unbearable, and decided to return to the U.S. alone. 
Kay Boyle’s impoverished family, too, could not provide her with much support when 
she left for France in 1923, after marrying a French exchange student at the age of 20. 
In France, the couple lived in a shabby flat in the port city of Le Havre, and there is no 
question that Boyle’s continued residence in France was—at least initially—less a 
matter of choice than of lack of money for a return ticket. And Pearl Buck, finally, 
expected rural China as the daughter of a missionary family, and lacked any of the 
luxury amenities that we tend to associate with elite travel. While these American 
expatriates, therefore, did indeed belong to a privileged class in the sense of being

50 Smith’s sister Phyllis Earle Ford, interview with the author, February 12, 2007.
American citizens—an aspect that was to become important in each of their life stories—they did not, generally, operate as members of global elite, and provide therefore excellent examples of “voluntary” cosmopolitans who were not acting from the position of (extreme) privilege.51

The second reason why an insistence on dislocation seems somewhat risky is because it is undeniable, at this point, that the processes of globalization have been and increasingly will be offering possibilities to experience what is understood as “the world” at home. But there seems nevertheless to be a difference between meeting a group of, say, Moroccan immigrants on the streets of New York, and getting lost in the alleyways of Tangiers. While a multicultural metropolis at home does offer a taste of “ethnic” food and fashion (i.e., the tastes of Others—whether in New York or Shanghai), along with some productive hybridization of cultures, this cannot reasonably be compared to the extremely complex experience of living in a foreign context with foreign customs and, perhaps, a foreign language. This latter experience can be overwhelming, even frightening. But it is exactly through the resultant de-habituation, if approached with openness, that a new understanding of self and other may emerge. A German or U.S. citizen, for example, can read and watch TV, eat at Thai or Ethiopian restaurants, and imagine the other’s culture to the best of her ability, but since she is tied to what Hans-Georg Gadamer called historical situatedness——the historically conditioned character of understanding—if she does not leave her sites of historical identification, her imagination will never be challenged by the real thing, and her sublimation faculties will push her empathy for other people under the emotional rug.

51 This is true at least in the context of U.S. American and some European cosmopolitans.
Intense challenges to our understandings of others, however, are exactly what we need for a cosmopolitan development that goes beyond culinary tastes and world music libraries. The cosmopolitan cannot help but start from wherever the accident of birth has thrown her, and must work her way toward more worldliness from there. This is a given. We need also to understand, however, that working one’s way toward worldliness requires living out in the larger world; it requires a cosmopolitan challenge or set of challenges to our ways of seeing and being in the world. Lived, visceral experience records itself on our very bodies, providing such challenges in a way that imaginative projection—whether through literature or through Google Earth™—cannot.

Ulf Hannerz has claimed that facing cosmopolitan challenges is likely to produce a mindset like that of Karl Mannheim’s “free floating intellectual”: the worldview of an independent individual who is neither bound by his original (home) culture, nor by any of the cultures that might host him. “The cosmopolitan's [masterful] surrender to the alien culture,” Hannerz claims, “implies personal autonomy vis-à-vis the culture where he originated. He has his obvious competence with regard to it, but he can choose to disengage from it. He possesses it, it does not possess him” (240, my emphasis). Such a declaration of radical independence again invokes Cynic ideals, but also relies still on an Enlightenment notion of the individual as a free and self-determining being (I have made a similar point with regard to Nussbaum’s notion of the individual). This notion, today—well after the poststructuralist intervention—seems problematic. It is also complicated by the fact that none of the authors discussed here,
as I have mentioned above, were ever able to completely separate themselves from
their original cultures, their—to invoke Gadamer again—historical situatedness. I will
flesh out this claim about the inevitable historical situatedness of the cosmopolitan in
the next section, in which I will also—working from Gadamer’s notion of the preju-
dice and Paul Smith’s concept of agency—lay out my own understanding of a ‘cosmo-
politanism in process.’

**Cosmopolitanism in Process: Prejudice, Practice, and Agency**

In his introduction to *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*,
Bruce Robbins defines cosmopolitanism(s) as “habits of thought and feeling that have
already shaped and been shaped by *particular collectivities*, that are *geographically
situated*” (2, my emphasis). If we want to address the issue of cosmopolitanism ade-
quately, Robbins claims, there is no single, universal way to do so. How we theorize
cosmopolitanism will probably have a lot to do with where we come from, and how
our cultures have led us to ‘habitually’ see things. Judith Butler, while in many ways
in agreement with Robbins’s argument, nonetheless emphasizes that this recognition
of difference does not necessarily make the (cultural) universal an impossibility: “All
it means is that there are cultural conditions for its articulation that are not always the
same, and that the term gains its meaning for us precisely through these decidedly less
than universal conditions” (Butler 46). How we define those universal values, then,
that in turn define cosmopolitanism is based on our perspective, and that perspective is
conditioned by our specific historical/geographical situatedness. As a result, there can
never be one single, universal cosmopolitanism, but as Bruce Robbins and Pheng Cheah emphasize, we must assume a plethora of cosmopolitanisms, which may share same basic values but will be very different otherwise.

Walter Mignolo agrees with this notion that there are a multitude of potential cosmopolitan perspectives, but insists, in “The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis” (2002), that what he calls ‘critical’ or ‘dialogical’ cosmopolitanism is a cosmopolitanism that can only be (re)conceived from the perspective of coloniality. While Mignolo explicitly defines coloniality as the “exteriority of modernity,” he also insists that by exteriority he does “not mean something lying untouched beyond capitalism and modernity, but the outside that is needed by the inside. Thus, exteriority is indeed the borderland seen from the perspective of those ‘to be included,’ as they have no other option” (Mignolo 724).52 In Mignolo’s view, “cosmopolitanism has to become border thinking,” and what he terms ‘diversality’—diversity as universal project—should be “the relentless practice of critical and dialogical cosmopolitanism rather than a blueprint of a future and ideal society projected from a single point of view” (744).

Mignolo stresses at least two points that are important for my own argument, and I will take up both in detail. The first point is that (critical) cosmopolitanism is a dialogical practice, which means it is process-oriented, something that has to be performed continuously over time to be successful. A critical/dialogical cosmopolitanism

52 Mignolo frames his essay with the claim that coloniality “is the hidden face of modernity and its very condition of possibility.” This is why he examines cosmopolitanism “within the scope of the modern/colonial world—that is, located chronologically in the 1500s on and spatially in the northwest Mediterranean and the North Atlantic.” That this ‘hidden dark face of modernity’ that is coloniality “remains difficult to understand as the darker side of modernity,” Mignolo argues, “is due to the fact that most stories of modernity have been told from the perspective of modernity itself, including, of course, those told by its internal critics.” In consequence, Mignolo sees a need for a re-conception of “cosmopolitanism from the perspective of coloniality” (722).
will not focus so much on the (perhaps always utopian) outcome, but will see the main
task in the *process* itself. We could say with Judith Butler that such a cosmopolitanism
“establishes the universal as that which is yet to be achieved and which, in order to
resist domestication, may never be fully or finally achievable” (Butler 52). Such a cos-
mopolitanism would have to be understood as a cosmopolitanism “in process.” And
the perpetual deferment of the cosmopolitan ideal in favor of a continuous process of
its reformulation, which I am suggesting here, shows interesting and productive parallels with Gadamer’s concept of the hermeneutic *conversation (Gespräch).*

Gadamer’s rehabilitation of the prejudice in *Truth and Method* (1960) springs
from a recognition of the inevitable historical situatedness of every human being, and
of the necessity of interaction between the contexts of the Self and the Other in pro-
ducing human understanding. To understand this interaction, he looks closer at the
etymology and half-hidden second meaning of ‘pre-judice’—in German, *Vor-urteil—*
which he understands as a *vorläufiges Urteil,* a preliminary and anticipatory judgment.
He argues that, rather than closing us off, our prejudices (or ‘preliminary judgments’) actually structure our ability to open up to ‘what is to be understood’; in this case, the
Other. Gadamer takes the Heideggerian notion of a prior hermeneutical situatedness

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53 In his recent book, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006), Anthony Appiah similarly elects the *conversation* as the key cosmopolitan tool. Cosmopolitanism, Appiah argues, “shouldn’t be seen as some exalted attainment.” Instead, it “begins with the simple idea that in the human community, as in national communities, we need to develop habits of coexistence: conversation in its older meaning, of living together, [of] association” (xix). In order to achieve such cosmopolitan association, according to Appiah, we have to turn to the conversation in its more modern sense—that of dialoguing, of having an exchange of ideas between people from different ways of life. And in our globalized world, he suggests, such conversations across boundaries, be they delightful or difficult, have quite simply become *inevitable.* Unfortunately, Appiah never quite offers us any details about how such cosmopolitan conversations are to be enacted, or about why they might be difficult or challenging. In my view, Gadamer offers a much more profound concept of the intercultural—and therefore the cosmopolitan—conversation.
and frames it in terms of the ‘fore-structures’ of understanding. A prejudice is an anticipatory structure that forms the basis for grasping the Other in a preliminary fashion. Not only are such pre-judgments unavoidable, because derived in part from our own cultural-historical situatedness, they are also absolutely essential to our process of understanding. Understanding, according to Gadamer, always involves an ‘anticipation of completeness’: a continuously revisable presupposition of ‘what is to be understood’ in its totality.

While prejudices are as vital to understanding as they are inevitable, the capacity to never get stuck with a prejudice, but instead to treat it as a ‘continuously revisable’ preliminary judgment is wholly dependent on what Gadamer calls ‘openness,’ or ‘goodwill.’ “Openness to the Other,” he writes, “involves recognizing that I myself must accept some things that are against me, even though no one else forces me to” (Gadamer 361). Without goodwill, there is no readiness to open up and revise preliminary judgments into new, though always still preliminary, judgments. Such revision, however, is vital to our functioning as understanding beings—and to our interactions with one another. The willingness to constantly revise assumptions to fit new and differing information prevents us from ever arriving at a fixed or final judgment, just as it allows us to better appreciate our interlocutor’s position with each passing moment of dialogue.

This idea of appreciation and understanding, some will argue, is naïve, even childish. The two major objections to Gadamerian understanding come from opposite sides of the spectrum, though they are closely related. The first rejects goodwilled
understanding as a ‘saming of the Other’—and thus as itself anti-cosmopolitan—while the second points to the impossibility of reaching consensus with those whose foundational axioms are opposed to our own. The first of these two positions has been most famously forwarded by Jacques Derrida, and parallels those voices that fear cosmopolitanism as a homogenizing and universalizing force. In his public debate with Gadamer, Derrida more or less rejected the possibility of intersubjective understanding wholesale. In his very short essay, “Three Questions to Hans-Georg Gadamer” (1981), he follows Nietzsche in insisting that the Other is absolutely and incomprehensibly alien, and that any interpretation of this Otherness is never an understanding mediation, but rather “the translation of what is alien into one’s self” (53), and therefore appropriation, a ‘saming’ of the Other. Derrida conceptualizes understanding as a necessarily subsuming, colonizing and imperial project that we can easily link to the Eurocentric cosmopolitan tradition epitomized in the writings of Immanuel Kant.

The cosmopolitanism we derive from Gadamerian conversation, however, seems to be of another breed. Against Derrida’s insistence on the totality of otherness, Gadamer maintained that interaction with the Other, even as it stays incomprehensible to some degree, is central to human understanding. He writes,

I was trying, in opposition to Heidegger, to show how the understanding of the Other possesses a fundamental significance […]. In the end, I thought the very strengthening of the Other against me would, for the first time, allow me to open up the real possibility of understanding. To allow the Other to be valid against oneself […] is not only to recognize in principle the limitation of one’s own framework,
but is also to allow one to go beyond one’s own possibilities, precisely in a dialogical, communicative, hermeneutic process.\textsuperscript{54}

Trying to understand the Other, Gadamer suggests here, is not only important for intercultural or interpersonal understanding. It is crucial for our self-understanding as well. Real self-understanding, he maintains, even requires the “strengthening of the Other against me.” If taken seriously, such a definition of understanding has rather serious implications for the cosmopolitan endeavor. Gadamer makes an excellent case for not only accepting, tolerating, or “getting used to” the Other, but also for giving the benefit of the doubt, assuming from the start of a conversation that indeed the Other might quite probably be more right than we ourselves.\textsuperscript{55} Without the challenge of an Other, he claims, we cannot see as constructed what we have learned to see as natural. Only the Other can save us from being stuck forever in the narrow little box that we believe to be the world, because it is “impossible to make ourselves aware of a prejudice while it is constantly operating unnoticed” (WM 299).\textsuperscript{56} It is, then, through

\textsuperscript{54} Hans-Georg Gadamer. “Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity: Subject and Person” in Continental Philosophy Review 33.3 (July 2000): 284.

\textsuperscript{55} In contrast to Appiah’s willingness to see the cosmopolitan conversation as, at base, not necessarily anything more than a tool for helping us “get used to” one another.

\textsuperscript{56} While Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics does provide us with some valuable tools for the practice of cosmopolitanism, we need to be aware that he has been excluded from most or all current debates on the topic for a reason. Even if we reject Derrida’s sweeping critique, we need to come to terms with the problems that are posed by Gadamer’s thoroughly Eurocentric outlook as well as by the prominence of tradition in his work, and his almost complete silence about women and other Others. The rare feminist and intercultural criticisms of Gadamer’s work prove extraordinarily productive in giving us reasons why we should and can make use of Gadamer’s concepts without accepting his rather conservative philosophical outlook wholesale. In her provocatively titled “Why Feminists Do Not Read Gadamer” (2003)—the introduction to a collection of 16 essays by feminists who do read Gadamer—Lorraine Code compares appropriations of Gadamerian thought in feminist theory to those of Nietzsche’s work, Gadamer’s hermeneutic interpretive conversation, Code suggests, is valuable despite its limitations, because it enables “recognition of the other and cognizance of the situatedness of human life and knowledge,” making us aware of the conflict that emerges “between hermeneutic requirements for openness and the limitations imposed by situatedness” (21). Code’s view is shared by other feminists like Linda Alcoff, who goes so far as to claim that some of Gadamer’s central positions “are
the provocation of the Other’s otherness, and the resulting move to self-historicizing and (often painful) self-awareness, that the cosmopolitan not only has the chance to better understand the cultural Other, but also becomes less and less determined by the society that formed her. As Paul Gilroy puts it in *Against Race* (2000), the cosmopolitan process leads to an understanding of how “one’s own particularity or identity might be transformed as a result of a principled exposure to the claims of otherness” (115). Shifting prejudices is therefore both an operation within any given conversation and a lifelong process, a general broadening of intellectual and emotional horizons.57

57 What happens, though, when we find ourselves in conversation with those whom Appiah calls, in *Cosmopolitanism*, ‘counter-cosmopolitans,’ the congenitally closed and the axiomatically opposed? These are the conversations that Appiah suggests can only conclude, at best, with the limited (and limiting) benefit of toleration, of getting used to one another’s values and perspectives. Precisely because the conversation is a search for agreed-upon truth, those whose vision of the world radically contradicts our own can only be understood historically, as non-participants in our truth-making process. At worst, if we cannot persuade these counter-cosmopolitans of the truth of our views, our only option is to “make sure that they can’t put their ideas into action” (153). Gadamer’s perspective, here, is more nuanced. Rather than jumping immediately from the problem of the failed conversation to non-conversational measures, as Appiah does, he offers first a framework for engaging meaningfully in any conversation. Above all, we cannot stop trying to reach an agreement, nor can we settle for merely contextualizing our interlocutor’s arguments, making him the object of our investigation. “By factoring the other’s standpoint into what he is saying,” Gadamer writes, “we are making our own standpoint safely unattainable” (Gadamer 302)—and this is where conversation ends. We must instead be prepared to strengthen the other against ourselves as another subject, thereby making our own position vulnerable. This requires that we make a careful distinction between the mind of the Other and the “perspective within which [the Other] has formed his views” (WM 292). We do not, Gadamer says, achieve understanding by “transposing ourselves into the [Other’s] mind” directly (292), but rather by ourselves
It is important to note, here, a crucial distinction between Gadamer and Hannerz. Gadamer’s assertion that, through a constant revising of one’s prejudices, one can become “less and less determined by the society that formed” one is not the same as Hannerz’s claim that cosmopolitanism “implies personal autonomy vis-à-vis the culture where [one] originated.” Such definitive detachment, Gadamer makes quite clear, is not possible. What is possible, though, through a continuous shifting of prejudice, is that we become more worldly, and less parochial. What is also possible, it seems to me, as a result of quite literally working through the Other’s position, is the development of emotional investment in his perspective—i.e., his perceptions of the existence of some given problem—even as we may ultimately disagree with his argument itself, the proposed solution. The prejudices resulting from such a cosmopolitan conversation will necessarily reflect an understanding that is not only intellectual but also empathetically emotional—even with those whose positions that are actually antithetical and inimical to our own.

If we think back, at this point, to Martha Nussbaum’s assertion in Upheavals of Thought that emotions are an integral part of the way we see and think about things, it becomes clear that the process of self-historicizing that occurs when the Other provokes us to examine our own prejudices is also bound to reconfigure our emotional landscape. While both our preliminary judgments—which seem to themselves rational—and our emotional structures are always at least partly a result of personal experience and socio-historical situatedness, both will affect one another and both will be trying to work through his argument from the standpoint of the perspective within which it was formed—insofar as possible, given our own horizons of understanding.
affected by cosmopolitan conversation, if we open ourselves up to it. Because, however, emotions are, as Nussbaum puts it, “messy material,” and always represent the world from the point of view of our own goals and projects, the degree of openness towards the Other that Gadamer calls for is difficult to achieve.

This notion of a cosmopolitan, empathetic understanding of strangers is not far, it seems to me, from Bruce Robbins’s argument that we need to develop “something like religious fervor” for the rights of others (Robbins 153). The development of cosmopolitanism is the development of understanding in rational as well as emotional terms. Cosmopolitanism in process rests on the notion that such understanding can grow into a solidarity that ignores or transcends boundaries of class, race, and nation. Stuart Hall’s words bear repeating here; as he notes, cosmopolitanism “means the ability to stand outside of having one’s life written and scripted by any one community, whether that is a faith or tradition or religion or culture—whatever it might be—and to draw selectively on a variety of discursive meanings” (Hall 26). Even if we ourselves can never totally transcend our own histories, we can learn to partly feel and act outside of the scripts they provide for us.

One of my central questions, then, will be what combination of factors help to produce such beyond-the-script cosmopolitan mindsets, my hypothesis being that cosmopolitanism is furthered by cultural and social conditions, and not only an idiosyncratic personal choice. I ground this hypothesis partly in Paul Smith’s assertion, in Discerning the Subject, that agency is a viable concept but that it does not derive solely from our free and independent will. In this context, I want to come back to a problem
to which I have pointed repeatedly throughout this chapter with regards to the arguments of Nussbaum, Hannerz, and, most recently, Hans-Georg Gadamer. It is also a problem of the older (Enlightenment) cosmopolitanism as such, one that has caused much discomfort for contemporary theorists of cosmopolitanism. I am referring to the reliance of all of these aforementioned thinkers on the idea of the *individual*.

The idea of the *individual*, Paul Smith claims, “is ideologically designed to give the false impression that human beings are free and self-determining, or that they are constituted by undivided and controlling consciousnesses” (Smith xxxv). While rejecting this Enlightenment notion of the self-determining individual, however, Smith is no less doubtful about the poststructuralist notions of the socially and historically determined subject that replaced it in many quarters. He reminds us that the term ‘subject’ generally refers to “one who is subject to ideology, to particular hegemonic formations” (xxxiii), and suggests that this notion fails to speak to the fullness of human experiences of selfhood. Smith argues that the poststructuralist notion of the subject is too narrowly constructed around this idea of subjection, which is why “any potential resistance that deconstruction might mount [against the “individual”] is in fact compromised by its lack of theory of subjectivity and *agency*” (xxxi, my emphasis). In short, then, while the Enlightenment thinkers attributed too much self-determination to the individual, many poststructuralist notions of the subject have not allowed for any self-determination—this, in Smith’s view, is just as grave a shortcoming. The contradiction that we find between the Enlightenment notion of the individual and the poststructuralist notion of the subject can, however, be quite productive:
The tension between the supposedly determining ‘individual’ and the determined ‘subject’ can be seen as dialectic, in that the human being, caught within the trammels of subjection or given over to the social formations which he/she inhabits, is never entirely a ‘subject.’ This is to say that subjectivity is partial: certainly, the ‘subject’ can always be conceived as being subject to something, but that something is always different, always changing. (Smith, xxxiv)

According to this logic, an American citizen, for example, would be subject to particular forms of state control as well as “subject to other discourses (to an ethnic and/or gendered division” (Smith xxxiv). These “other discourses,” I want to suggest, although Smith does not explicitly say so, include not only domestic discourses, but also inter- and transnational ones. And it is precisely in the human reaction to and within these conflicting discourses that Smith locates agency. Drawing on Jacques Lacan and Louis Althusser, he distinguishes “between, on the one hand, notions of resistance which rely upon deliberate and conscious activity on the part of the human agent,” as seen in theories that rely on the self-determination of the individual, and, on the other hand, “a notion of resistance which would be able to recognize [this resistance] as, in fact, a veritable product of ideological interpellation” (xxxi). In his investment in the latter version of resistance, Smith understands ‘subject’ to describe

what is actually the series or conglomeration of . . . subject positions, provisional and not necessarily indefeasible, into which a person is called momentarily by the discourses and the world that he/she inhabits. The term ‘agent,’ by contrast, will be used to mark the idea of a form of subjectivity where, by virtue of the contradictions and disturbances in and among subject-positions, the possibility (indeed, the actuality) of resistance to ideological pressure is allowed for (even though that resistance too must be produced in an ideological context). (xxxv)
It is this notion of resistance and agency in Smith’s work that I want to draw on for my own concept of cosmopolitanism in process.

Understanding the (U.S.) cosmopolitan development as a certain “resistance” to dominant American ideologies in the twentieth century, I will, in the following chapters, not assume that any of the authors I am concerned with relied purely on free (or good) will for their transnational and transracial cosmopolitanism. In this, I believe, I will diverge from the positions of Ulf Hannerz, Martha Nussbaum and Hans-Georg Gadamer, who all three, each in their way, do rely on this Enlightenment vision of the individual. I also, however, will not assume that any of “my” authors were completely determined by American exceptionalism, racism, patriarchy, or other ideological discourses. Instead, I will follow Smith’s argument that “a person is not simply determined and dominated by the ideological pressures of any overarching discourse or ideology but is also the agent of a certain discernment” (xxxiv), is capable of some sort of choice in those moments where ideological discourses collide. A person, according to Smith, “is not simply an actor who follows ideological scripts, but is also an agent who reads them in order to insert himself/herself into them—or not” (xxxiv-v).

Essentially, the idea is that agency is provoked within us by the conflicting demands of the different ideological discourses into which we are interpellated. It is with this in mind that I want to bring together the ideas of Gadamer, Nussbaum, and Smith.

Gadamer’s concept of the shifting prejudice is of central importance for my notion of ‘cosmopolitanism in process,’ but it relies too much on reason and does not give enough credit to the important role of emotions in our thought processes. More
crucially, it assumes a unitary individual, unfragmented and capable of free choice, of goodwill plain and simple. The same is, in the final analysis, true for Nussbaum’s recognition of the “intelligence of emotions.” And both analyses may be enriched by a more nuanced understanding of agency—as something that emerges from conflicting discourses within a person, a person who thus becomes an agent. The ideal of *cosmopolitanism in process*, an endless expansion of personal horizons and a rejection of conservative loci of security, requires, for both its initiation and its maintenance, particularly strong conflicts between a wide variety of ideological discourses. This process necessarily involves moments of *both* Cynic and Stoic cosmopolitanism—moments of detachment and rejection, as well as moments of (re-)attachment and affirmation. It also includes moments of aborted engagement with the Other—cosmopolitan failures. As we will see, the lives and works of all the authors under consideration here incorporate all of the above. They also illustrate how difficult it is to transcend one’s historical situatedness and the set of prejudices that come along with it, the

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58 Incidentally, this seems another strong argument for the need to travel. I am indebted to Ira Allen for the suggestion that without the coercive state (or other) apparatus behind ideological interpellation, imaginative traveling can certainly produce emotional identification, but it cannot construct subjectivity in a way total enough (i.e., inclusive of the body) to provide a counterdiscourse to that of nationalism in all its physical inscription. That is, I cannot be interpellated by a book or a website in quite the same way as I can be by the customs agent at the French border. The latter, as part of a state regulatory mechanism, can make demands of me that I not only do certain things, but *be* a certain variety of person—simply through her mode of interaction with me. While a book makes some similar demands on me as a reader, those demands are less clearly articulated in terms of subject-position and less compelling in terms of any implicit threat of force. Moreover, they are not supported by nearly such a wide array of shared physical activities as, say, nationalism. To put this further in perspective, we have only to compare the collective corporeal habits of nationalism in the United States—beginning with the Pledge of Allegiance for schoolchildren and teachers alike—to the solitary physical activity directly provoked by even a very good, very emotionally compelling and cosmopolitan travel narrative. While the latter will make some individuals *want* to be world citizens, and is valuable in part because of that, the former makes its subjects simply *be* citizens of the United States.
best of intentions notwithstanding. To think and feel on the borders of our own consciousness is no mean feat.

As I mentioned earlier, there is a second important point in Walter Mignolo’s argument that critical, dialogical cosmopolitanism “has to become border thinking,” and it is this to which I would now like to return. Mignolo is assuming that some of us are much better positioned for a meaningful cosmopolitan development than others (meaningful because not Eurocentric and colonizing), and, like Judith Butler in “Universality in Culture,” he claims that the dialogic practice of critical cosmopolitanism has to be reconceptualized from the perspective of those yet ‘to be included,’ those who so far have been forced to live with global designs that others have planned and projected.\(^{59}\) This grouping, according to Mignolo, is the only one not prone to falling into the Kantian trap, and it is a grouping that seems to encompass (although Mignolo does not explicitly say so) former colonial subjects, women, gay and lesbian groups, people with disabilities and ethnic minority groups. These underprivileged groups are, Mignolo suggests, in a unique position to develop the ‘border thinking’ he calls for.

All four authors selected for my dissertation do, in fact, inhabit such border positions within U.S. society, which is why a better understanding of their developing cosmopolitanisms might be particularly helpful for a better understanding of specific and individual American cosmopolitanisms.\(^{60}\) An important question in this context

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\(^{59}\) ‘Global designs’ is Mignolo’s term for managerial global narratives, which include, for example, Christianity, imperialism and neoliberal globalization. These are opposed to emancipatory narratives (what Mignolo calls cosmopolitan projects), such as those developed by Vitoria, Kant or Marx.

\(^{60}\) I am not claiming that the American versions of cosmopolitanism these authors lived allow us to understand cosmopolitanism as such, although they should help us towards such a more general (and processual-universal) understanding. Rather, I am emphasizing the national brand of these individual cosmopolitanisms, because I believe that Timothy Brennan is at least partly right when he claims, in
will be whether their relative marginalization—and the ‘border thinking that springs from it—did provide these authors with a starting position for cosmopolitan development that was in significant ways different from that of, for example, white Anglo-Saxon males from well-to-do backgrounds. A tempting “control-group” that comes to mind in this context, includes the so-called high modernists—F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, and the like—who spent the better part of the 1920s as expatriates in Paris, and who have been routinely referred to as “cosmopolitans” in both popular texts and critical treatments. That which among the high modernists (and in much criticism of their work) goes under the name of cosmopolitanism, however, is in several and significant ways different from the idea of cosmopolitanism I have laid out here. Used synonymously with terms like “well-traveled,” “sophisticated,” “knowledgeable” and “refined,” modernist cosmopolitanism evokes images of a bohemian life in foreign metropolises, of tragically displaced artists living in shabby but romantic hotel rooms, writing famous books at little tables in smoky cafés. This, anyway, is the image that we get when we tap into the myth of Americans in Paris in the 1920s.

Certainly, of course, this is not to be read as a dismissal of the work of the high modernists, but I do mean to call into question the ease and relative lack of reflexivity with which the word cosmopolitan is frequently applied to their endeavors. Indeed, some of these writers might well have been cosmopolitans, as I have developed the

“Cosmo-Theory” (2002), that “cosmopolitanism makes sense only in the context of a specific national-cultural mood” (661). While I am much more hopeful than Brennan with regards to the potential of cosmopolitan developments, it seems quite reasonable to assume, as Bruce Robbins and Pheng Cheah also do in Cosmopolitics, that cosmopolitanisms are always geographically and culturally situated.
term; but many were without question not. Using Fitzgerald, Stein, Barnes and Hemingway to represent a spectrum of feeling and action—from decidedly non-cosmopolitan to rather more so—I’ll touch on several factors that make a number of people frequently considered under the heading unsuitable or, at the very least, less than ideal for a consideration of cosmopolitanism-in-process.

“Bands of Permanently Displaced Tourists”: Cosmopolitanism, Modernist-style

The Modernist trope of artistic displacement and European “exile”—much cherished by the American expatriates of the 1920s—was nothing radically new in American literary history. On the contrary, spending time in Europe had been a significant trend among American artists from the mid-nineteenth century on, concurrent with the increasing popularity of the “Grand European Tour,” a cultural rite of passage among American members of the upper and upper-middle classes. With mass transportation getting faster and more easily accessible, both tourism and “literary expatriation” had become even more popular in the early twentieth century, and Paris was certainly one of the most trendy destinations for both. Disappointed as well as bored by American values, flocks of young American artists saw in the old French capital a cultured and sophisticated refuge from American-style consumer capitalism and conformity—or, at the very least, something to distract them from their ennui.

This benign American invasion, however, did not leave Paris unchanged. As Malcolm Bradbury points out in Dangerous Pilgrimages: Transatlantic Mythologies and the Novel (1995), Paris underwent “a speedy process of internationalization, in-
deed Americanization” (302), during the first half of the twentieth century. By 1925, according to Bradbury, American tourists and expatriates dominated certain quarters of Paris so thoroughly that “it was possible to visit without even meeting the French, write without ever bothering to speak to a French writer” (324). Americans in Paris, be they tourists or expatriates, mostly preferred to remain among themselves and generally did little to understand or engage with their host culture, let alone allow their own understandings of the world to be dramatically questioned or changed. Such cliquishness did not come without a certain disdain for non-members, even if those non-members happened to be the sought-out hosts themselves. F. Scott Fitzgerald, for example, one of the most prominent members of the Lost Generation, tended to display questionable intercultural (in)sensibilities, as we learn from Earnest Hemingway’s famous chronicle of the Parisian 20s, *A Moveable Feast* (1964):

Scott hated the French, and since almost the only French he met with regularity were waiters whom he did not understand, taxi-drivers, garage employees and landlords, he had many opportunities to insult and abuse them. He hated the Italians even more than the French and could not talk about them calmly even when he was sober. The English he often hated but he sometimes tolerated them and occasionally looked up to them. I don’t know how he felt about the Germans and the Austrians. I do not know whether he had ever met any then or any Swiss” (168-9).

While Hemingway was doubtless dedicated to settling old scores when writing *A Moveable Feast*, less partial accounts of Fitzgerald equally—if less scathingly—assert

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61 Unfortunately, despite its impressive scope, Bradbury’s book on the history of the transatlantic novel almost wholly eclipses both writers of color and women. To be even remotely comprehensive, Bradbury’s account would need to imagine an Atlantic that is also both Black and Female, including such works as, amongst others, Paul Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic* (1993), Tyler Stovall’s *Paris Noir* (1996), Brent Hayes Edwards’s *The Practice of Diaspora* (2003), Shari Benstock’s *Women of the Left Bank* (1987), and Andrea Weiss’s *Paris Was a Woman* (1995).
that he had little understanding of or patience for things and people non-American. Such sentiments translated into his fiction as well. Despite many years of expatriation, only one of his novels—the 1934 *Tender is the Night*—and a few short stories are set in France, and all focus more or less exclusively on American characters and concerns. While *Tender is the Night* is often read alongside *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Moveable Feast* as one of the chronicles of modernist-style cosmopolitanism, the non-American world presented there is by turns maddening and stale, one of several potential causes of Dick Diver’s downfall—as indeed also of Fitzgerald’s own.

Such an ethnocentric attitude was far from unusual for the modernist brand of (cultural) cosmopolitanism. While displacement and exile, as literary theorist Caren Kaplan reminds us in *Questions of Travel* (1996), “function as powerful tropes in the cultural production of modernisms” (28), they do not necessarily translate into a serious engagement with people and cultures outside the U.S. Rather, Kaplan argues, the figure of the exile or displaced cosmopolitan—as depicted, for example, in Malcolm Cowley’s *Exile’s Return* (1932)—helps reinforce the modernist myth of the free-floating, disconnected, and independent artist. “Lifted out of the material, political and social conflicts that generated so much displacement in the twentieth century,” Kaplan

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63 Interestingly, and perhaps ironically, the working title for the script/short story that became “Babylon Revisited” was initially “Cosmopolitan.”

64 Even such an attenuated version of cosmopolitanism was unpalatable for U.S. literary consumers of the period, many of whom felt Fitzgerald had strayed too far from his roots in the novel, felt he failed to adequately address the political realities of the United States of the 1930s. While we might well find Fitzgerald lacking in solidarity with the downtrodden generally, it seems important to note that the economic situation with which he was expected to concern himself was that of the U.S.
writes, “the exiles who come to live in Bradbury’s modernist sites are men without a country. . . . it is modernist practice that frees the artists from the worldly locations of nation-states and bring them together for loftier pursuits” (Kaplan 30). This description of the modernist exiles as self-imagined “men without a country” evokes the figure of the Cynic, detached cosmopolitan. Unlike Diogenes, however, these Americans are neither poor, nor do they reject all attachments. This is why Kaplan, to some degree following Malcolm Cowley, understands them not as exiles, but as “bands of permanently displaced tourists.” As tourists, Kaplan explains,

they exist precisely through a form of voluntary homelessness, yet their lack of commitment or roots limits them to a role as witness to other people’s revolutions, other people’s tragedies and successes, and all the other ‘real’ events that seem to swirl around them. . . . The displacements of ‘exile’ have brought the modernists of Cowley’s group not to a fuller understanding of the histories and particularities of the places they have traveled through but a will to power that consolidates nationalist identities and confirms a repressive hierarchy of values. (46-9)

There is thus a divide between the way that the lost-generation expatriates wanted to see themselves (as almost forcefully displaced, lonely exiles), and the way they actually lived (as a rather ethnocentric group of long-term tourists). As such, modernist-style cosmopolitanism in practice resembles neither Cynic nor Stoic cosmopolitanism—which would involve either a rejection of all national attachments or an emphatic embrace of multiple attachments—and is perhaps more adequately associated with what Benedict Anderson has called “long-distance nationalism”: a nationalist feeling among diasporic group members outside of their country of origin.65 While I

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am not pushing a reconsideration of American expatriates as diasporic, it does seem to me that the claim that “exile is the nursery of nationality” (Lord Acton, quoted in Anderson 1998, 59) speaks to certain of the nationalist and patriotic feelings circulating among the expatriate community in Paris.\textsuperscript{66} At least in this regard, high modernist fiction fits literary critic Terry Caesar’s description of American travel writing more generally: Despite its situatedness in and seeming concern with non-American locations, it remains “a writing of America. It is nothing if not a national practice.”\textsuperscript{67}

If expatriation as such does not guarantee cosmopolitanism, however, neither does marginalization. While I have claimed earlier in this chapter that the cosmopolitan developments of the four authors under consideration were facilitated by their relative marginalization in U.S. society, it is important to note that “facilitated” does not mean “produced.” The examples of both Gertrude Stein and Djuna Barnes show that the “double marginalization” they experienced as lesbian women in early twentieth-century U.S. society, while indeed prompting both of them to leave the country, did not translate to the kinds of cosmopolitan attitudes that have been theorized here.

Gertrude Stein arrived in Paris in 1902 and stayed in France until her death in 1946. By the 1920s, her famous salon at 27 Rue de Fleurus had become the artistic epicenter of the modernist community in Paris. More important than this real-world

\textsuperscript{66} Although many of the expatriates initially ferociously rejected their home country (in order to then hang out with like-minded Americans in Paris), they learned in Europe, as Cowley puts it, “to regard the dragon of American industry as a picturesque and even noble monster” (106). After a few years of Old Europe, most members of the Lost Generation lost their grudge against American-style capitalism, mass production, and mass consumption, which was only increasing and intensifying during their absence. With the renewed rise of European nationalisms and the effects of the Great Depression, most exiles, as Cowley puts it, “decided that all nations were fairly equal [and] were ready to find their own nation had every attribute they had been taught to admire in Europe” (Cowley 95-6).

\textsuperscript{67} Terry Caesar, \textit{Forgiving the Boundaries: Home as Abroad in American Travel Writing}. Athens, Georgia University of Georgia Press, 1995, pp.16.
community that Stein helped create, however, Jessica Berman argues in *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Community* (2001), is the fact that in her writing Stein was deeply dedicated “to issues of commonality, shared voice, and exchange of experience, especially in relation to dominant discourses of gender and nationality” (3). In Berman’s view, Stein, by way of her writing, succeeded in the creating the possibility of a cosmopolitan community in narrative.\(^6^8\) However, Berman also admits that in her real-life community and politics, Stein was, like most of the other writers Berman considers, “not . . . radical or even progressive” (3).\(^6^9\) And her real-life cosmopolitanism was, perhaps accordingly, much less pronounced than that which Berman discerns in some of her fiction. If the U.S. was Stein's “country” and Paris her “home town,” as she famously declared in *Paris, France* (1940), her affective and intellectual ties were certainly with her country, while it was mostly practicality that linked her to her “home town” in France: “That other country you need to

\(^6^8\) Berman argues for an understanding of community as a narrative process, and offers the hypothesis that narrative cosmopolitanism is the crucial forerunner of real-world cosmopolitanism. In her chapter on Stein, Berman argues that “Stein's writings ask us to read her focus on wandering literally, as expressions of the importance of geography, (dis)placement, and movement within the construction of subjectivity” (5). In her view, “Stein's radical narratives may be seen not only to reconstruct the subject as nomadic and polyvocal, but also to challenge the dichotomy between community and cosmopolitanism implied by nationalism” (5).

\(^6^9\) Berman explains her exclusion of real-world communities and politics with her focus on narrativity: “because I argue that community is performed in its narratives and is not derived from an originary position or outside source, I restrict myself to those narratives. Thus while the James family, or Bloomsbury, or Stein's salon all make fascinating study, they rarely concern me here. I include these ‘real-world’ communities as part of the conditions of authorship of these novels, but not as the benchmark by which to judge them. In this sense, too, I would claim, I avoid limiting the possibilities of community enacted in these novels to the political positions espoused by their authors” (26). The kind of study I am attempting here is obviously very different in its aims and will therefore focus on a different set of writers. Because I am concerned primarily with understanding a real-world phenomenological process—cosmopolitanism—I am of course less concerned with using or not using author’s lives to “judge” their novels by the “benchmarks” those lives offer.
be free in,” she writes in *Paris, France*, “is the other country not the country where you *really belong*” (3, my emphases).

Stein needed Paris, Gerald Kennedy explains in *Imagining Paris* (1993), “because it was foreign enough to seem unreal and extraneous. For Stein, who steadfastly maintained an American outlook, every detail of Parisian life, from architecture to fashion to food, expressed cultural difference; despite her long residence there, the city remained fantastical” (73). And Stein made no effort to change that. foreigners should remain foreigners, was her conviction, and she very much wanted to remain a foreigner in her adopted home town (Stein 20). After all, the relationship this enabled her to live out with Alice B. Toklas was, in its structure and power dynamic, profoundly conservative, if not reactionary—as were, for the most part, Stein’s politics. The “alien tradition” of French life not only allowed her to live her homosexuality relatively openly, but also sheltered her, perhaps the most modern writer of her time, from the modernity of her own country.

Djuna Barnes came to Paris much later than Stein, but she shared the city for a while with the “Grand Dame” of the high modernists. Sent to France as a journalist for the American magazine *McCall’s* in 1921, Barnes was initially full of disdain, but was soon captivated by Paris and settled there, with interruptions, for almost ten years. Throughout all this time, however, she kept a considerable distance to the city and its inhabitants. “The aloof expatriate,” her biographer Phillip Herring writes, “never assimilated and remained essentially unconnected with the life of the city, even as she made a home there. She learned no more than a few words of French and formed few
acquaintances with Parisians” (133). Herring quotes the novelist Emily Coleman, a
friend of Barnes, who described in a 1936 letter what she saw as the insularity of
Barnes’s life in France:

When you were in Paris all those years you lived among Americans, not French, or English, or Germans. Your ‘friends’ were all Americans.
. . . And all the ‘girls’ you ever speak of are American—Margaret Anderson, Solita, Jane, etc. . . . But my point is your love for Paris is a
romantic passion, having little connection with Paris’s reality. . . . You
don’t feel pressed upon in France because you are not in the least aware
of French life that is going on around you.  

The fact that Barnes, according to Coleman, evades being “pressed upon in France”
simply by ignoring and withdrawing from it, might explain her continued un-cosmo-
politan attitude. Being ‘pressed upon’ by ideas and ideologies seems a key aspect of
social processes of interpellation, and if Barnes indeed managed to avoid the pressures
of ‘other’ ideas and ideologies, it was that much more unlikely that her habituated be-
liefs would be challenged, and, perhaps, adjusted. The distance and disinterest that
both Stein and Barnes show in French matters and people mirrors that of their male
compatriots more closely than one might have expected, despite their marginalization
in U.S. society. This fact underlines my previous assertion that neither expatriation nor
marginalization (and the ‘border-thinking’ that theorists like Mignolo associate with a
marginalized position) necessarily produce cosmopolitan attitudes, even if Mignolo
and Hannerz, each in his way, are right to point out the productive qualities of these
conditions.

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Ernest Hemingway—as we might see in his disparaging description of Fitzgerald—is a slightly more complicated case in this respect. “From the start,” writes Malcolm Bradbury, “Hemingway was an expatriate writer, and he would always remain one. Most of his life would be spent outside of the United States, and very little of his work, that mostly about his Michigan childhood, would be firmly set there. Nearly all the rest would be about the various foreign landscapes and settings he lived in, traveled through, physically appropriated” (319). Hemingway’s biographer Michael Reynolds, however, reminds us that such appropriation by no means automatically translates into a transnational and transracial engagement with and for others:

Except for his brief Thirties involvement with the Spanish Loyalists, political causes, for the most part, did not interest [Hemingway]. . . . He was a benign racist [sic], no more and no less prejudiced against Jews and Negroes than most Oak Parkers, which was less than the average White American at the time” (238).

One thing that separates Hemingway from many members of the Lost Generation is that foreign landscapes, causes and customs figure prominently in his fiction. One thing that separates his heroes from those of the authors discussed in the following chapters is that, for his heroes, isolation in “another country” serves primarily as a “test of [American] values.”71 American values, in Hemingway’s work, are first questioned and then affirmed, and life abroad remains thus firmly tied to an American

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71 Reynolds gives the following examples for the repeated testing of American values in Hemingway’s novels: “Jake Barnes (1926) is an American isolated in Europe where his values are tested to the breaking point. Frederic Henry’s trials in *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) are a study of isolation’s effects. Robert Jordan’s American values are pushed to their limits behind enemy lines in Spain (1940). And Santiago, lonely old fisherman, alone on the Gulf stream for three days with his giant marlin, is broken but undefeated, his values intact” (Reynolds 1986, 239).
outlook (which can, however, incorporate even fervent critiques of U.S. politics and culture). His life, at the same time, betrays traces of engagement—as does, for example, Henry Miller’s—that make him difficult to situate neatly. In fact, Hemingway’s life and works might offer an interesting midpoint between the hostile and inferiority-saturated disinterestedness of a Fitzgerald and the radically engaged politico-cultural negotiation of a William Gardner Smith.

That cosmopolitanism can also arise right out of the purportedly hegemonic center of American society becomes more clear if we return to the case of Garry Davis. He was, after all, a white Anglo-Saxon male—and he made one of the most drastic moves toward (a nevertheless American) cosmopolitanism by renouncing not only his U.S. citizenship but any nation-state citizenship at all, for moral and ethical reasons. Even if we do not agree that his personal life choice was the best or most effective way to practice cosmopolitanism, we have to respect it for its radicalism of both intention and action. What prompted Davis’s rejection of nationalism, to the degree that he refused even formal association with a nation-state, seems to have been the shocking realization that, in the name of a “just” war, he was killing German civilians on a mass scale. The fact that Davis’s initial project after renouncing his citizenship was to go help with the reconstruction of German cities, because he felt “responsible for some of the damage there,” shows that his concern was a humanita-

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72 To do Ernest Hemingway’s life and work full justice is, of course, both beyond the scope and outside of the aims of this brief gloss. What should emerge here, however, is that his mode of subscription to American values and his relative disinterest in political or social solidarity with the Others of his travels make him less immediately interesting—with respect to the version of cosmopolitanism I am developing—than the authors here selected.
rian one, one that, for him, made national belonging impossible.73 Feeling cheated into an (unpunished) war crime as a result of the “duty” he “owed” to his native nation-state, Davis decided that only a stateless man could avoid such coerced complicity.

In Davis’s case, then, it seems to have been some sort of shock that opened up the space of agency that Paul Smith sees as emerging from conflicting ideological interpellations. The rupture that this shock produced in his (American) identity led to an embrace of cosmopolitan values that, at the time, was supported by such luminaries as Albert Einstein, Albert Camus, and, not inadvertently—Richard Wright. The emotional trauma involved in killing non-combatants—which we could understand, in Smith’s terms, as a lived moment of collision between the ideological discourse of a “just” war and the ideological discourse of human rights—opens up the possibility of choice for Davis. This is the moment in which Davis shows, to use again Smith’s terms, that he is not only “an actor who follows ideological scripts, but is also an agent who reads them in order to insert himself/ herself into them—or not” (Smith xxxiv-v).

I want to stress here that Davis’s experiences—and those of the American writers under consideration here—did not simply produce in them cosmopolitanism as such; rather, for Davis and the authors under consideration, particular combinations of social, historical, and personal factors led them to moments where ideologies conflicted to a degree that allowed them to choose paths different from those they had known before. In all these cases, such choices led to increasingly cosmopolitan and active engagement with and for others, engagement extending beyond national, racial or religious commonalities. In their lives and works, we see spaces of agency open up

73 Davis as quoted in the *Time* article “Citizen of the World,” March 1, 1948
again and again, often in the moments where they are challenged or confronted by their Others; they use those moments of choice to actively, as Gadamer has it, strengthen the Other against themselves—in the process partially transcending their historical situatedness. Such lifelong sequences of more and less well-used spaces of agency, which I am terming cosmopolitanism-in-process, are traceable in the lives and works of Kay Boyle, Richard Wright, William Gardner Smith, and Pearl S. Buck.
CHAPTER 3
Women in Dark Times:
Kay Boyle’s Transnational Politics and Poetics

When Kay Boyle left the United States at the age of 21, she was planning to stay in France only for the summer. She would meet and stay with the family of her newly acquired French husband, and she would write her first novel; this would, in turn, finance her return passage to the U.S. Such were her expectations when she boarded the S.S. De Grasse in June 1923 in New York, headed for Le Havre. But things turned out differently. The manuscript of Boyle’s first novel was lost in the transatlantic mail, and she and her husband could not afford the return passage for themselves. So, the couple remained in France; and, although the young marriage deteriorated quickly, it would be 16 years before Boyle finally set foot again on American soil. Over these many years in Europe, she developed not only into a mature artist, but also into a veritable citizen of the world, becoming deeply involved in the political and social realities of her several host countries, and engaging herself on behalf of stateless refugees fleeing the Nazi regime.

Although she was, in her way, part of the modernist Lost Generation, Boyle’s experiences were from the outset very different from most of her American compatriots. She certainly shared the general discontent with American realities that characterizes the Lost Generation, but she had no war experience—as had Hemingway, Dos Passos, Cummings and many others (including Gertrude Stein), all as volunteers for ambulance corps—and she did not choose Paris as her destination. Having fallen in
love with French exchange student Richard Brault in her home-town of Cincinnati, Ohio, Boyle became a French citizen through marriage and spent the first years of her expatriation in a shabby flat in Le Havre and elsewhere in France and England, moving to Paris only in the late twenties. “These two facts,” Boyle wrote later in *Being Geniuses Together* (1968), “would seem to disqualify me as a member of the lost generation or as an expatriate. But I was there, in whatever guise” (11). And *there* she was indeed, and in a much more present, involved and cosmopolitan way than most of her more famous contemporaries.

This involvement, and the desire to communicate her thoughts and observations to an audience as large as possible, is perhaps what helped produce the pronounced stylistic break between Boyle’s very first novel and almost all of the others that she wrote in the course of her life. While *Process* (originally written in 1924, but whose manuscript was lost until it was rediscovered by Sandra Spanier in 2001) presents its tale in a highly modernist style,\(^1\) Boyle’s subsequent novels adhere mostly to the conventions of realism, valuing the easy conveyance of story over formal experiments.\(^2\) Over the years, Boyle went from publicly demanding that “the plain reader be

\(^1\) In her introduction to the 2001 edition, Sandra Spanier explains that the manuscript for *Process* got lost in 1928, when Boyle gave her only copy away to a publishing house and never saw it again. Spanier herself then found the manuscript when conducting research in the New York Public Library. Spanier emphasizes the importance of *Process* for Boyle scholars, as its modernist style corresponds to Boyle’s highly acclaimed poetry of the time, and Thomas Austenfeld, in his introduction to *Kay Boyle for the Twenty-First Century: New Essays* (2008), agrees that *Process* “amply demonstrates” that “Boyle helped shape modernism’s style” (1). For a detailed discussion of the stylistic elements of *Process*, see Anne Reynes-Delobel “‘Calculating the leap from void to absence’: Abstraction in the Writing of Kay Boyle,” in *Kay Boyle for the Twenty-First Century: New Essays*. Ed. Thomas Austenfeld, Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2008, pp. 9-22.

\(^2\) While Boyle started to write her next novel, *Plagued by the Nightingale*, shortly after *Process*, the novel was only published in 1931 and was long considered her “first” novel. All of her other early novels were published in quick succession after that.
damned,” to embracing a style that was deliberately targeted at the (female) masses, for both material (Boyle had to feed eight children) and political reasons. While her initial internationalist impulse might well have sprung from a typically modernist desire for dislocation (away from the U.S. and toward the capitals of Europe), her experiences in Europe seem to have led her away from modernist aesthetics and toward simpler style, one reflecting a valuation of communicability and emotional appeal over renewal of language and artistic expression.

Boyle's peculiar biographical position in comparison to other lost-generation modernists is perhaps expressed most acutely in her own co-chronicle of the literary history of the Lost Generation: her 1968 edition of Robert McAlmon’s *Being Geniuses Together*. Originally published in 1938, McAlmon’s autobiographical chronicle of 1920s expatriate life in Paris was republished in the late sixties at the initiative of Boyle, who added her own chapters after each of McAlmon’s original chapters, offering thus a double (partial) autobiography, and covering the same time period from two different, but often related points of view. Reading the 1968 edition of *Being Geniuses Together*, we become aware how different Boyle’s life was from that of McAlmon and other lost-generation expatriates. While McAlmon lived at the very

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3 Boyle was one of the signers of Eugène Jolas’s “The Revolution of the Word”—a modernist manifesto that appeared in 1927 in Jolas’s literary journal *Transition*. The manifesto states that “the revolution of the English language is an accomplished fact,” that “time is a tyranny that is to be abolished,” and that “the writer expresses, he does not communicate.” Jolas considered Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake* a perfect example of the kind of literature the manifesto was promoting. http://www.yaleherald.com/archive/xxvi/9.18.98/ae/design.html, accessed on May 2, 2008.


5 Boyle decided to supplement McAlmon’s book with her own chapters out of a deep dedication and friendship to him, who, as she writes in the Preface, as both a writer and a publisher “deserves to be remembered for his unique qualities” (xi). She hoped that the reprint edition of the book would “help to accord to Robert McAlmon his rightful and outstanding place in the history of the literary revolution of the early nineteen-twenties” (xi).
epicenter of modernist expatriate life, Boyle spent most of the 1920s away from the center, exploring the periphery on her own. Although she never lost touch with the center, she certainly escaped the kind of togetherness that sustained many of the geniuses of the lost generation—and that may have impeded their cosmopolitan development.

In a 1924 letter to her friend Lola Ridge, Boyle explains her impatience with the attitude of her fellow American expatriates, who seem to her “mortal afraid of getting away from the center of action, from their cliques.” And while, at first glance, McAlmon’s eventful life looks just as “cosmopolitan” as Boyle’s, there is indeed an important difference in attitude, one that distinguishes Boyle also from long-term expatriates such as Ernest Hemingway. When McAlmon emphasizes, in Being Geniuses Together, that despite all his extensive traveling and his many years abroad, “I never felt myself an expatriate, or anything but an American” (BGT 12), we immediately realize that things were, must have been, more complicated for Boyle. Surrendering her American citizenship at age 20 (although she regained it later), she was married first to a Frenchman, than to a French-born American, and finally to an Austrian-turned-stateless-turned-American (and had also an illegitimate child with an Irish-American expatriate). Over the course of 20 years, she lived with her ever-growing family first in France, then in England, in France again, Austria, France, the U.S., Germany, and, finally, again the U.S.

6 Boyle in a letter to Lola Ridge, quoted in Spanier, 16.
7 In the introduction to McAlmon’s autobiographical novel The Nightinghoulds of Paris, posthumously published in 2007, Sanford Smoller writes that “even after six years in Europe, very little of anything European had rubbed off on him” (xii).
All this, and the fact that she had a tendency to get deeply involved with her host cultures on cultural, social, political and personal levels—a characteristic that Thomas Austenfeld has aptly termed “deep expatriatism”—made Boyle’s self-understanding necessarily more complex. And her particular style of expatriation, as we will see, relates directly to an interpersonal, affective and multiply attached mode of cosmopolitan engagement—and by extension also to her literary style. While it is only in her later fiction that Boyle fully develops such a stance, her early fiction, as I will show in the first section of this chapter, is particularly helpful in not only opening our mind to cosmopolitan viewpoints, but also in letting us see, feel, and understand the price that the nascent cosmopolitan pays for her abandonment of the comfort of family and nation, for her restless searching (in this case both for “modernity” and for “something called freedom”), and for her eternal, and perhaps irrevocable, partial outsiderness.

Martha Nussbaum asserts in *For Love of Country?* that “becoming a citizen of the world is often a lonely business” (15), even a “kind of exile” from secure truths and familiar attachments. Boyle’s early fiction offers vivid examples of the loneliness of this cosmopolitanism.

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8 Austenfeld considers Boyle “a special case in the history of American expatriate writers,” and refers to Boyle’s style of expatriation as “deep expatriation” because “her emotional involvement with Europe is deeper than that of any other expatriate author I am familiar with, and her political observations about Europe between the wars show unparalleled perspicacity, especially to readers reared with a European background” (45). While I am in complete agreement with Austenfeld’s assessment and find his term quite ideal, I would of course suggest that the other authors considered in this dissertation—with the possible exception of Richard Wright—would qualify as “deep expatriates,” too. (Austenfeld also mentions Paul Bowles as a possible candidate for “deep expatriatism” in a footnote.) Still, the relative shortness of that list is quite remarkable when compared with the masses of American expatriate writers that the 19th and 20th centuries produced.

As we will see, all the heroines of these early novels are wandering, searching individuals, who live in a “kind of exile” and who are certainly experiencing considerable loneliness and isolation. As we will also see, however, Boyle was already in these early works—presumably as a result of her own cosmopolitanism-in-process—concerned with possible solutions to this dilemma, solutions that involve a sometimes almost blind quest for emotional/sexual attachments, and, eventually, the development of a less homeless brand of cosmopolitanism based on a proliferation of attachments. Such development—as can be traced in Boyle’s life as well as in her fiction—challenges us to redefine the understanding of “rooted cosmopolitanism” as something characterized by roots in a community of origin. Instead, we do greater justice, both to the metaphor and to the people it hopes to describe, when we come to see those people as characterized by a capacity for transplanting their roots.

From the late 1930s on, Boyle continued to concern herself in her fiction with problems of rootlessness; however, she did so now in the context of human rights in a Europe first threatened by the growth of fascism and then torn apart by WWII. Boyle’s novels of the 40s especially—where she comes back again and again to the humanitarian tragedies of stateless refugees—show her astute awareness of the problems posed for international and human rights by the growing phenomenon of statelessness. This is a concern that springs from her own deep practical and emotional entanglement with others’ statelessness—and offers productive parallels, as I will show, to Hannah Arendt’s cosmopolitan philosophy in The Origins of Totalitarianism (1951). Given the importance of Arendt’s work on questions of world citizenship and the “Rights of
Man” for current political theorists and philosophers—as, for example, Seyla Benhabib, Bonnie Honig, Giorgio Agamben, and Jacques Rancière—I will, in the second section of this chapter, give particular attention to Boyle’s important novels *Primer for Combat* (1942) and *1939* (1948) in the context of both Arendt’s work and current discussions on cosmopolitanism and human rights.

Cosmopolitan literature, according to Martha Nussbaum—and it seems to me that we can confidently include non-fiction writing in this category—features “people who, by the virtue of their outsider status, can tell truths about the political community, its justice and injustice, its embraces and its failures to embrace” (140). The overwhelming majority of Boyle’s fiction does take an eternal outsider’s interest in the interaction of the individual and the social, as well as in the achievements and failures of specific political communities. It also, though, allows its readers to care about people engulfed in the problems of those ‘foreign’ communities. In doing so, it certainly fulfills Nussbaum’s demand to allow “strangers to inhabit our minds and our hearts” (Nussbaum 1996, 140, my emphasis). This particular combination of outsider perspective and emotional engagement, which is observable in nearly all of Boyle’s novels, was also of crucial importance for her own cosmopolitan development (as one might expect, given the autobiographical quality of her fiction). Since it is a combination that will prove crucial not just for Boyle, but for all the authors discussed here, I will pay particular attention to the dynamics of outsiderness and emotional engagement in my following discussion of Boyle’s early novels.
The Wandering Woman: Feeling Outsiders in Boyle’s Early Novels.

Taken together, the heroines of Kay Boyle’s highly autobiographical early novels—from the 1920s to the mid-1930s—represent development toward a cosmopolitan mind.\textsuperscript{10} With their concentration on the painful search of the nascent, “homeless,” Cynic cosmopolitan, these novels are particularly well-suited to help us understand why Martha Nussbaum asserts in *For Love of Country?* that “becoming a citizen of the world is often a lonely business” (15). While Boyle’s first novel *Process* (2001) is set in the U.S. and concerned with the social and personal situation that drives its heroine out of the country and into the world to “start a new life,”\textsuperscript{11} most of her other early novels—*Plagued by the Nightingale* (1931), *Year before Last* (1932), *My Next Bride* (1934), and *Death of a Man* (1936)—concentrate on the experiences and problems of an American abroad. Roughly speaking, the development we observe when considering the five novels contextually and consecutively is that of (1) disillusionment with home country and family, (2) disillusionment with host country (and host family), (3) recognition of the futility or impossibility of return, (4) a resulting spiritual and emotional homelessness, feelings of loneliness and desperation, (5) an emerging desire for a new attachment, a new form of belonging, and (6) the attempt to develop a new rootedness outside of nation and family—often through the almost desperate attachment to another individual. This attachment, the passionate love and

\textsuperscript{10} An earlier version of this section of the chapter has been published as “The Wandering Woman: The Challenges of Cosmopolitanism in Kay Boyle’s Early Novels” in *Kay Boyle for the Twenty-First Century: New Essays*. Ed. Thomas Austenfeld, Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2008, pp. 151-167.

\textsuperscript{11} Kay Boyle in a letter to her sister Joan, quoted in Sandra Spanier’s introduction to *Process* (2001), pp. xviii). The listed novels include all of Boyle’s early novels up to *Death of a Man* (1936) consecutively, with the exception of *Gentlemen, I Address You Privately* (1933), which, concerned with homosexual love, is generally agreed to be less autobiographical than her other early novels and does not present a female heroine.
sexual desire for another person, is nearly always the attempted remedy in Boyle’s early fiction, but alone it never cures the emotional ailment. The only remedy for spiritual homelessness, as emerges in Boyle’s early fiction and then becomes a dominant feature in her later work, is indeed love and connectedness, but love on a greater scale: a more universal love that reaches out and goes beyond, embracing humankind as such.

Boyle’s early fiction may thus be read as a sort of fugue on psychic homelessness, offering irregular but progressive repetitions on a pattern. As such, it moves from non-cosmopolitanism to Cynic cosmopolitanism and, with the experienced impossibility of living the latter, towards what we could loosely consider a more Stoic brand of cosmopolitanism, one that emphasizes a multiplicity of connections. Whether this necessarily equals the “rooted cosmopolitanism” that Anthony Appiah and others have celebrated—which would be firmly rooted in (and patriotically inclined toward) one’s original culture, while only appreciating the diversity of other cultures—is questionable. Rather, Boyle seems—in the final analysis—to advocate a more fluctuating and multifaceted practice, relying on intersubjectivity (particularly between women), and on planting and transplanting one’s roots as one goes along.

Kerith, in Process, Kay Boyle’s first novel, is the most rooted of all the female characters of Boyle’s early fiction, being the only one who still lives at home in the U.S, and still in the bosom of her family. Kerith is the alter ego of Boyle herself, a young woman feeling frustrated and trapped in her hometown Cincinnati as well as in her family, defined by a patriarchal grandfather, a hapless father, and a boring and un-
paid job. The figure of light in this setting is Kerith’s mother Nora, who teaches her the importance of social activism as well as modernist art, and deeply believes in her daughter’s talent for both. “I want you away from here” (3), she entreats her, and her words meet Kerith’s own desire. Having fallen in love with a French exchange student, Kerith wants to escape not only her family home, but also a politically and artistically frustrating America, away to a foreign place that presumably offers more. “We’ll just go away together,” suggests her French lover, and Kerith’s answer betrays her longing for a life in motion: “Until the time comes to go on to something else” (88), she answers, and, given the autobiographical quality of the novel, this sounds like a resolution as well as a self-fulfilling prophecy for the years to come in Boyle’s own life. The desire for something new and different, something unfixed and open, drives Kerith away from home; it is a desire so strong that “she knew she couldn’t go back, even if it killed Nora. The experience was through for her, and there could be no reiteration” (95). At the end of the novel, Kerith and her new husband are ready to embark on their journey, and while the trip is only meant to be for the summer, we already sense that Kerith will find it difficult to ever truly come back.

Written retrospectively, while Boyle was living in the French Bretagne, and, later, in a shabby, cold apartment in Le Havre, Process is certainly, as Sandra Spanier writes in her excellent introduction to the novel, “a Künstlerroman, an autobiographical account of the artist’s origins” (xviii). Beyond that, though, it also helps us understand what can be the first step in the cosmopolitan development: a profound disillusionment and dissatisfaction with the personal, social or political status quo in one’s
community of origin (in Kerith’s—and Boyle’s—case, all three), combined with the audacity of the adventurous mind. If this combination of disillusionment, curiosity and boldness can be the starting point for the cosmopolitan process, however, it is by no means a guarantee for it. But when it leads to the decision to try out ‘something new,’ as it did in Boyle’s case—who ascribes in Being Geniuses Together her trip to Europe to “an impatience with conventions and [a] commitment to something called freedom” (13)—there is a good chance that the adventurer will be confronted with new impressions and taxing situations that will change her outlook forever. This can of course be a difficult and demanding process, one that can either initiate broader solidarities and extra- or non-national engagements or lead a person to avoid or even abort such a process. Boyle’s next four novels, all of them largely autobiographical, offer brilliant portraits of the complexities and difficulties that confront the cosmopolitan-in-process.

Plagued by the Nightingale, Kay Boyle’s second novel, more or less picks up where Process ends. Bridget, a young American woman, comes to France to live with the petit-bourgeois, provincial, and severely inbred family of her French husband Nicolas. Nicolas, who has studied for several years in the U.S., is a much more worldly character than the rest of his family, but having inherited the bone disease that runs in the family as a result of its limited gene pool, he has become a bitter and cynical man, and he longs for an independence that he cannot financially afford.12 Bridget,

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12 In the novel, it is understood that the repeated inbreeding of the family—Nicolas’s sister Bridget is not the first to marry her cousin—has led to a number of biological defects which now keep circulating in the family’s bloodlines. We already know that Bridget’s husband is severely disabled as a result of these defects, and her own difficulties in bearing his children are similarly ascribed to them. This is why Nicolas does not want to have children with Bridget. He is afraid that his own inherited bone disease will be transmitted to his and Bridget’s children, and thus transported into the next generation.
meanwhile, coping with a new culture, new language, and new social values, learns that living in a foreign country does not necessarily mean more freedom or happiness. Instead, it means not understanding what people say and always feeling improperly dressed. In Bridget’s case, it also means dealing with a family that demands a child from her and Nicolas, against her husband’s will and regardless of his hereditary disease. The family’s ignorance of the risks of such a pregnancy is evident in their careless attitude toward the fifth pregnancy of Nicolas’s warmhearted sister Charlotte—the only member of the family with whom Bridget feels somewhat at ease—and the pregnancy costs Charlotte her life. Bridget, who has “no idea at all of family life,” tries her best to fit into this strange community, admitting to herself that she is “afraid to be alone . . . . afraid to have no family at all . . . no one, nothing” (62-3).

The stifling atmosphere of the inbred family gets some fresh air with the arrival of Luc, a young doctor and a friend of Nicolas’s brother, who is expected by the family to marry one of Nicolas’s younger sisters. Luc is a lively, attractive young man who not only excites the girls of the family beyond all reason, but also begins to lighten up the dullness of Bridget’s days. When Bridget notices that Luc has fallen in love with her, she is torn between her commitment to Nicolas and her desire “to escape with [Luc] into a new life” (123). Nicolas has meanwhile become obsessed with the idea of leaving his oppressive family, and possibly France. The dream of escape, freedom, and alternative lives pervades the narrative almost from beginning to end, but at the last it is not Bridget who leaves her gloomy husband, or even with him
leaves his family and France. Instead, it is Luc who escapes the confines of the family by accepting a post in Indo-China.

Bridget, on the other hand, decides to stay, despite Luc’s desperate assertion that “you know you are coming with me” (201). She feels that it is “too late” for running away with Luc, and decides instead to try to have the child that the family is demanding she have with her ailing and embittered husband. This rather startling decision of Bridget’s at the end of the story has been interpreted as insincere (by Richard Carpenter) or ambiguous (by Suzanne Clark), as a sign of emotional exhaustion (by Katherine Anne Porter), or as a sacrifice made on the basis of faith and acceptance (by Sandra Spanier). Having saved Luc from the clutches of the family by sending him away, Spanier particularly cogently argues, Bridget in the end “chooses to remain behind and save Nicolas, too,” in this case from his own cynicism and bitterness (62).

While I find Spanier’s interpretation the most intriguing of those available, we should not underestimate the importance of the fact that Bridget is an expatriate far from home, and a woman who is “afraid to be alone.” Given that Boyle—as Spanier herself tells us—only “dragged in the love interest” in the form of Luc after having her manuscript turned down several times (Boyle, quoted in Spanier 62), we can assume that Bridget’s decision is not primarily about a choice between two men. Instead, we might understand her final decision as reflective of a desperate need for attachment, community and a sense of belonging. As becomes clear early on in the novel, Brid-

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get’s own family cannot provide her with such a sense, and a return to the U.S. would therefore be futile, even if it were financially feasible. And while she learns quickly that, below the surface, the members of Nicolas’s “close-knit” family are almost as isolated and lonely as those of her own, this does not lessen her need for emotional attachment and belonging. So, on the one hand, her commitment to having Nicolas’s child against his own will and according to the will of his family might well be a plot to get the money that Nicolas’s father has shamelessly offered the couple for their first offspring, money that would make it possible for Nicolas to start a new life away from his family. On the other hand, though, it might be rather a true concession to the wishes of the family, a concession aimed at producing some of the sense of unity Bridget so needs--her distaste for French provincial life notwithstanding. In both cases, Bridget’s decision would ensure that she does not have to face her worst enemy: the state of “being alone,” without family, community, partner or child. And while it seems a doubly poor choice, with Luc being the charming and loving character that he is in the published version of the novel, Bridget’s fear of loneliness and isolation could well serve as the driving engine for just such a decision.

The outsider’s fear of isolation and loneliness, as expressed in Bridget’s character, is thus a central theme in *Plagued by the Nightingale*. While her outsider position is what gives Bridget a particularly astute perspective on the mechanisms that drive her husband’s provincial family and French bourgeois life in general, it comes with an almost unbearable amount of emotional suffering. Having abandoned her original community in hopes of a more meaningful life, Bridget has pulled her roots
out of their native soil—only to start feeling that she will perish if she does not find a new and suitable soil to plant them in. And while the French province does not seem to be very suitable at all to her, it still does provide some nourishment. At the end of the novel, Bridget is determined to plant her roots where she is, to do her best to thrive in less than ideal conditions. A wanderer's life without anything that feels like 'home,' she has come to understand, is difficult to live, perhaps too difficult. Her former dreams of a life lived in perpetual mobility give way to a blind determination to belong and to fit in somewhere, even to a place and community that she finds highly problematic—a move we could label somewhat unkindly as cosmopolitan abortion.

In her own life, Boyle made different choices, although her identity crisis seems to have been much the same as Bridget’s. As she makes clear on the pages of Being Geniuses Together, she and Richard Brault suffered in his family's house outside of the town of St. Malo, in the French Bretagne, a situation quite like the one depicted in Plagued by the Nightingale. As in Bridget’s case, her American presence seems to have threatened the value system of her new French family just as much as the family threatened her own. The American-educated Richard—like Nicolas in the novel—would have been the only possible mediator between the two cultural systems, but he was much too agitated about the outmoded mores of his family to function as such. “Every Sunday afternoon,” Boyle writes, “after a furious exchange on religion between Richard and Papa at the dinner table, Richard would slam upstairs and pack a bag and study the timetable for trains that might lead somewhere else entirely” (BGT
But, like Bridget and Nicolas, Boyle and her husband initially did not have the financial means to leave.

Unlike Bridget, however, Boyle had two powerful means of escape: her reading of fiction, poetry and her mother’s letters, and the novel—Process—she was writing about her “old” life in the U.S. The “separate life” of her novel, writes Boyle, “made even reality bearable” (BGT 70). And, unlike Nicolas, Richard was not suffering from a bone disease and was able to find a job in Le Havre, and thus able also to leave the confines of his family.\footnote{We can only speculate as to why Boyle decided—as she was writing Plagued by the Nightingale in her safe “haven” on the Atlantic coast—to make Bridget’s fictional situation even more inescapable than her own situation had been. What we do know, however, is that like her heroine she herself experienced what it meant to have her daily life “placed suddenly at the hands of [a family]-in-law of [another nationality]” (BGT 44), and that she stood by the side of her husband, despite or because of her unhappiness, homesickness and disillusionment with her new “home.” We might see this attachment in part as the clinging to romantic love that was still, at this point, her reaction to a psychic homelessness that would continue to plague her.} The miserable flat in Le Havre, however, and, later, an apartment in Harfleur, turned out to be just as stifling as and even unhealthier than the family atmosphere in St. Malo. During the couple’s two-year stay in the little town of Harfleur, Boyle observed a near-complete transformation in herself. “So totally French did I become,” she writes in Being Geniuses Together, “that I scarcely recognized the look of my own features when I happened to catch sight of them in the glass. I surrendered totally to [the French people] whose lives I had entered” (147). This ‘total Frenchness’ not only included a fluent command of French, but also the planting of cabbage, the milking of goats, and the preservation of beans. Boyle now got up at daybreak three times per week to ride on the horse-drawn carriage of one of the local farmers the two hours to Le Havre, where she sold her home-grown vegetables at the
market. This was indeed, a long way from the life of the modernist expatriates in Paris.

The fictionalization and at least partial resolution of her real-life conflicts that Boyle exercised in both *Process* and *Plagued by the Nightingale* was to set a pattern for her next few novels. Her 1932 *Year before Last* is in large parts a fictional account of her intense love relationship with the American expatriate Ernest Walsh, for whom she left her French husband and with whom she spent an exciting and exhausting six months in the South of France. Like Bridget in *Plagued by the Nightingale*, the book’s heroine Hannah is an uprooted woman in search of new attachments, and, like Bridget, she tries to find these attachments in intersubjective relationships to other human beings, be they male or female.¹⁵ In *Year before Last*, this search is disappointed bitterly by the male counterpart (who is not only incapable of close emotional relation but also dies at the end of the novel), but there is at least a glimpse of hope for future female communion—in the end, Hannah finds some common ground with her dead lover’s ex-girlfriend. This pattern of male disappointment and death and female communion and hope is continued in Boyle’s next novel, the 1934 *My Next Bride*, which again features a female cosmopolitan as main character. This latter protagonist, Victoria, seems even more lost and alone than Bridget or Hannah.

¹⁵ Hannah’s lover Martin Sheehan is loosely modeled after Boyle’s real-life lover Ernest Walsh. In the novel, Martin is an Irish-American poet and magazine editor who is dying of tuberculosis and living the life of the careless cosmopolitan. Hannah goes along with his careless lifestyle, but soon finds out that she needs more attachment than the cynical and death-bound man can give her. Furthermore, she can barely bare his continuing relationship to his former lover and financier Eve. However, after finding out that she is pregnant from Martin, and after being confronted with Martin’s quickly deteriorating health, Hannah turns to an imperfect and somewhat problematic companionship with Eve in order to escape her permanent loneliness and desolation. For a more detailed discussion of *Year before Last*, see my article “The Wandering Woman: The Challenges of Cosmopolitanism in Kay Boyle’s Early Novels” in *Kay Boyle for the Twenty-First Century: New Essays*, ed. Thomas Austenfeld.
Victoria has recently joined an artist colony in Paris, and now drifts through her days with neither means nor attachments, working for food and shelter in the colony’s little store. “I don’t think I am very much,” she tells another woman in the colony, “I am waiting to know why I am here. I do not know” (79). When she meets the American expatriate Antony, she hopes that it is he that she has been waiting for. But not only is Antony married, he is also—in spite of his marriage—feeling just as lost as Victoria, drifting aimlessly and homelessly through his days and nostalgically missing his home country: “Everyone’s there I like,” he tells her, “but I’m never there” (162, my emphasis). And while Victoria asserts that “there’s nothing to take me back” (162), she also secretly longs for her idea of home. Both of them are yearning for an America to which they can never return, since, as Spanier puts it, it is “an America that no longer exists; there is nothing to fill the emptiness of exile” (84). In a way then, “America” has become a dream of the past, the forever unattainable home.

The United States thus functions in My Next Bride as what Martha Nussbaum has described as “the idealized image of a nation as surrogate parent” (1996, 15). Having begun one’s life “as a child who loves and trusts his or her parents,” Nussbaum explains, “it is tempting to want to reconstruct citizenship along the same lines, finding in an idealized image of a nation a surrogate parent who will do one’s thinking for one” (15). This, for Nussbaum, is one explanation for people’s emotional (patriotic) attachments to their birth nations. Consequently, according to Nussbaum, one of the emotional difficulties of cosmopolitanism is that it “offers no such refuge” (15).
This is exactly why cosmopolitan life is such “a lonely business,”—why it can feel indeed like a “kind of exile” (15).

Exiled is exactly how the protagonists of My Next Bride both feel. “What do you think happens to a man,” Antony asks Victoria, “if his country has no place for him? Do you think it means there’s nothing else, no place left? Do you think I am intended to stop being?” (214). In Antony’s eyes, his existence itself is somehow connected to a sense of meaningful belonging in “his country,” his fatherland, the U.S. Because he has not experienced a sense of belonging there, he has been trying—in vain—to find it somewhere else, and he is clearly getting tired of the searching process altogether. When, later in the novel, Victoria suggests to him that he can ‘always keep going,’ he answers: “I can’t go far enough . . . nobody can” (284). In his utter despair, Antony comes to recognize the meaninglessness of the word “roots” for him. He tells Victoria that a group of gypsies once told him that “they call us ‘trees’ because [in comparison to their own lifestyle] we stand still, we can’t move, we’re caught rooted. Rooted in what? In rugs, books, floors, possessions that cannot follow after. God, how I hated trees this afternoon” (136). The “us” here is thoroughly ambiguous, because while originally used by the gypsies to denote residents, settled people in general, neither Antony nor Victoria qualifies as such. They both are nomads themselves, perhaps exactly because rootedness, as Antony makes clear about his life, gives “nothing.” He both resents and somewhat envies the rooted “trees” that keep “their peace mean and hard inside them like all the people that drive me to despair” (136). What Antony looks for, then, is not so much roots as intersubjective openness and sharing,
and although he clearly has not found that in his unhappy wanderings, it is rather “at home” in the U.S., and close to everyone he professes to like, that he finally commits suicide. Antony feels as lost and empty at “home” as he has felt abroad, and America miserably fails as a surrogate parent just as his biological parents have failed.

Victoria, for her part, comes close to losing her life as well. After discovering that she is pregnant from one of her many lovers—she does not know which one—she is given some dubious pills by the members of the colony, which make her terribly ill. Standing across from the Café de la Paix in the early morning, she faces westward towards the United States: “Listen, America, she said, and her nose was running. America, listen, listen, she said, but there was nothing more to say” (86). America is clearly not listening to Victoria, cannot listen, cannot help her in her desperate search for meaning and in her spiritual and physical suffering. The reason why Victoria, unlike Antony, survives, is not a rootedness back in her original community, but her close relationship with Fontana, Antony’s wife. After all has fallen apart, the novel ends for Victoria with Fontana’s “small clear voice picking it up and putting it together and going on with it forever” (327). Again, thus, Boyle seems to be suggesting that female intersubjectivity—unlike sexual relations with men—provides a grounding antidote to the loneliness of the homeless wanderer. Given that Boyle did generally not understand herself as a feminist—she repeatedly said as much—such a privileging of female community seems remarkable. One possible explanation is Boyle’s very close connectedness to her mother during her childhood and adolescence (her father and grandfather had always been somehow ‘outside’ this female community within the
family), which she continued after her expatriation. In *Being Geniuses Together*, she writes that during her time in St. Malo “I lived for the letters that mother and Lola [Ridge] wrote me, and for the writing of letters to them” (67). Nevertheless, however, Boyle also very much relied on heterosexual relationships throughout her life, and this perhaps why the purely homosocial ‘solutions’ to the cosmopolitan dilemma are always left somewhat tentative and open at the end of her stories, as if Boyle herself had not (yet) been entirely sure about their validity.

What is *not* shown to be of any help, however, in any of Boyle’s earlier novels, is some kind of traditionally understood “rootedness” in one’s community of origin. To the contrary, these books regularly show one’s *imagined* roots in family, tradition, and nation to be of little help in the cosmopolitan dilemma. We should thus perhaps understand Boyle’s fiction as a chance to critically rethink the connotations now attached to the idea of “rooted cosmopolitanism”—the concept of a fundamental, constant home in which one’s roots are sunk, or the notion that cosmopolitan attachments proliferate in an expanding series of concentric circles. These denotations fail the very metaphor on which they depend. As with the word “transplant,” so often used to describe expatriates, refugees and other potential cosmopolitans, we tend to forget that in the world of botany and gardening, plants that are being “transplanted” from one place and soil to another *do* take their roots quite happily with them, in order to grow

16 That Boyle was critical about the idea that our original communities provide us automatically with a certain rootedness is also underlined by the fact that, in her short story collection *The First Lover and Other Stories* (1933) she portrays people who are not expatriates, but similarly lost and disconnected as the heroines in her early novels. “Apart from their new topicality,” Sandra Spanier explains, these stories “are a by-now-familiar chronicle of missed connections between people hungry for contact but unable for a variety of psychological reasons to overcome their isolation from others” (Spanier 106).
further—if often differently, in accordance with the new conditions—in their new environments. The roots are actually part of the plant, and not of the original soil, which only gave initial nourishment to them. It should be similarly possible for human rootedness to be something shifting, changing and evolving, the difference being that it is the human being herself who decides when to pull her roots out and transplant them into new soil, which will be at times more nourishing and at times less.\textsuperscript{17}

That Boyle does not see a remedy or even necessarily value in unchanging rootedness in one’s original community becomes apparent also in the way she depicts some of the more nationally and psychically confined counterparts with whom she regularly confronts her wanderers. While they are generally portrayed as less lost and drifting than the cosmopolitans, these origin-bound characters are—as, for example, Nicolas’s family in \textit{Plagued by the Nightingale}—not necessarily any more healthy or happy. Rather, Mama, Papa, and even Charlotte are trapped in their \textit{petit bourgeois} traditions and poisoned, quite literally, by the disease that results from their closedness toward any new (blood) influences. And in her 1936 novel \textit{Death of a Man}, Boyle goes to extremes to contrast her Cynic cosmopolitan woman with her seeming opposite: the passionately rooted nationalist.\textsuperscript{18} Written in the mid-thirties, when Boyle lived in the Austrian town of Kitzbühel, the novel is much less autobiographical than those

\textsuperscript{17} To be “rooted,” then, is to stand in a certain relationship with one’s environment. The term, in and of itself, suggests only that this environment, whatever and wherever it is, must be to some extent able to offer nourishment, to accept one’s roots—and by no means necessarily implies anything about one’s origin.

\textsuperscript{18} In fact, this novel and its era offer quite interesting insight into the character of nationalism, as both the German National-Socialists in Austria and the Austrian nationalists who fiercely opposed them considered themselves to be the “true” nationalists with respect to not only the same territory, but the same populace as well. The character Prochaska, in his vision of a German nation overflowing petty geopolitical lines on a map, is, then, rooted in both an idea of the German nation and the National-Socialist ideology.
discussed so far, but it is nevertheless thoroughly informed by her first-hand experiences with the growing impact of National Socialism in Austria.

Pendennis, the American heroine of _Death of a Man_, is again an image of complete deracination and purposelessness. An extravagant and well-traveled American expatriate rather casually married to an Englishman, she meets the Austrian doctor Prochaska in the small Austrian town in Tyrol and falls—as so often in Boyle’s novels—instantly in love with him. As a result, Pendennis sends her husband away and begins a love affair with Prochaska—a partial precursor to the mountain man, rooted in nature itself, who would populate many of her later novels. This affair, however, is from the beginning deeply overshadowed by Prochaska’s passionate commitment to the emerging National Socialist movement. On this score, the two lovers could not be any more different. While Prochaska is a fervent patriot and nationalist, fighting on the side of the German Nazis against the equally totalitarian Austrian government, Pendennis is a homeless drifter: “Wherever it was,” she tells Prochaska, “it was the awakening again to passage, not to remaining here or remaining anywhere, but to the quick and silent packing of things” (304). Uprooted from both American culture and her personal family history, Pendennis has collapsed into fatalism and cynicism. “I’m hard broken bits and pieces of things they threw out with the skeletons and cactus,” Pendennis tells Prochaska, revealing her bleak self-perception. “You belong to a permanent thing and to people that don’t change, but that can’t put me together. Too many parts are gone.” “I’m nobody, nothing,” she insists, “I’m free, so free I have nothing to do but take tonight or tomorrow night to a café table and stretch it out like a
corpse on public exhibition” (278-9, ellipsis in original). There could hardly be a clearer expression of the utter desperation and loneliness that engulfs the cosmopolitan who has lost or surrendered all attachments.

By the end of the novel, then, Pendennis has still not managed to fully instantiate her felt bond with Prochaska, and is as alone as ever. In this, she is perhaps the most isolated character of Boyle’s early fiction; left with nothing and no one to fall back on, she represents the nadir of despair that Cynic cosmopolitanism can produce. Prochaska, for his part, though he is rooted in both the nation and, as Burton Hatlen has pointed out, in the Nazi Praxlmann as a symbolic (Über)father, is eventually shown to be no better off. Having lost not only his lover, but also his community and his home, he is forced to flee alone to Italy, a country he despises.19 Thus, Prochaska ends up just as lonely and helpless as Pendennis, becoming himself a solitary drifter deprived of all meaningful attachments, and we can only speculate as to whether this places him on a path toward cosmopolitanism. A reliance on “rootedness,” as Prochaska’s example shows, can turn out to be treacherous, since one’s roots may be set in such toxic soil that even their loss is a benefit. Even then, though, there is a sustained sense of loss.

Boyle’s own life, to some degree, demonstrates this as well. Although she, unlike all of her early heroines, did have deep emotional roots in the female side of her family--and in an idea of nation, as we will see--it seems that through much of her early expatriation she was as lonely a drifter as any other. And, as in the case of her

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heroines, her repeated efforts to remedy her condition through emotional and sexual connections seem to have mostly failed. Her own feelings of disconnectedness and despair seemed to have climaxed in what she herself has described as her going “off the deep end”—her complete psychic and physical collapse in Paris in 1928 (BGT 317). After an abortion and a severe case of cerebral meningitis that confined her to the American Hospital in Neuilly for several weeks, Boyle decided that she “was not going to be a failure any longer” (BGT 322). Escaping the clutches of Raymond Duncan’s commune in Paris (which involved her kidnapping of her own daughter), she found a temporary home at Le Moulin, Caresse and Harry Crosby’s mansion in the country, and, shortly after, began a relationship with Laurence Vail, who was to become her second husband and the father of three of her children. And while she did ask Vail for a divorce after 13 years of marriage (so that she could marry another man), she never again became as desperate and lonely as in her early years. Although she and her family experienced multiple relocations during the two following decades, Boyle seems, as Sandra Spanier puts it, to have managed to “send out roots” during her early years of expatriation, “through which [she] would draw sustenance, personal and artistic, for the rest of her life” (29). These roots, however, and this is important, seem not to have been confined to her newly started family. Rather, Boyle started making considerable efforts to take meaningful root in her new environments by actively engaging with the culture and politics of her respective countries. The country in

20 An American painter and writer born in France, Vail was known in the expatriate community variously as the King of Montparnasse or the King of Bohemia, and at the time he met Boyle, he was also still married to Peggy Guggenheim (they divorced the following year). Nevertheless, Boyle instantly knew “that, having found Laurence, I would never be alone again” (BGT, 331).
which this worked best for her was certainly France, and, as becomes apparent in her politically engaged novels of the 1940s, it was again *personal emotional involvements* that paved the way for her new rootedness and her cosmopolitan engagement.

**Passports, Borders, and Refugees: Boyle’s Novels of the 1940s**

Already during the 1930s, as we can see in *Death of a Man*, Boyle had become more and more sensitive to the highly alarming developments around her. Having been directly confronted with the rise of National Socialism during her time in Austria—and thus perhaps more sensitized than others to what was going on—she became increasingly alarmed about the state of the world as such and the developments in Europe in particular. 21

1939 was a particularly important year to and for Boyle, one that she later, in 1948, chose as the title for one of her most intriguing novels. Politically, this was of course the year in which Hitler invaded Poland and France declared war on Germany. In the long interim between this initial declaration of war and the first German attack, however, very little was of the second world war was to be felt in the Haute Savoie, were Boyle now lived, and she complained in a letter to

21 An interesting project of the time was *365 Days* (1936), which, as Spanier writes, “signals an important shift in the focus of Kay Boyle’s art” (Spanier 101). Much more overtly political than her earlier work, the book has a remarkable structure and intent. Composed of 365 stories of each 300 words or less, and written by 116 different authors (among them Nancy Cunard, Robert McAlmon, Emanuel Carnevali, Hilaire Hiler, Charles Henry Ford, Langston Hughes and Henry Miller), it was intended as a fictional record of recent events and of individual lives all over the world on each day in the year 1934. Each month within the collection was prefaced by a synopsis of the historical events of that month, and the individual stories, the editors Boyle, Vail and Conaran write in their preface, were entitled with only a date because each of them did belong to the moment of a “specified day and month of this particular year,” a year that had been, in their view, “a desperately eventful year . . . characterized by almost universal unrest” (xii and xi). While most of the 116 contributors wrote only one piece for the collection, Boyle herself wrote ninety-six, many of which are concerned with social injustice and racial discrimination.
Caresse Crosby that “half the world is skiing while the other half dies.”\textsuperscript{22} On a personal level, the year 1939 brought a new baby for Boyle, cohabitation with her beloved mother, who had come to live with them in Mégève, and acquaintance with Baron Joseph von Franckenstein, a political refugee from Austria who would, four years down the road, become her next husband.

Resulting from her close personal involvement with von Franckenstein and others in his situation, Boyle developed a keen understanding for the precarious position of individuals who had, as a result of the war, become stateless. Franckenstein had been an Austrian citizen, and he had left his country only days before the so-called \textit{Anschluss}, the German annexation of Austria in March 1938. Since his Austrian citizenship had thus become non-existent, and since he refused to become a German citizen, Franckenstein was living as a stateless refugee in the French mountains (\textit{sans papiers} in the truest sense of the phrase), teaching classical languages in a boarding school there. The French declaration of war on Germany, however, made him automatically an “enemy alien” in France, since, in a way, he belonged to what had now become enemy territory. The great irony there is that he was an enemy because of his presumed technical belonging to a state to which he, in fact, technically no longer belonged—but which did remain his emotional home. As a result, the French authorities offered him two options: either he could join the French Foreign Legion, or he we would be incarcerated in an internment camp. His own preferred choice—to join the French army and fight against the Nazis—was out of the question. Franckenstein thus went into a French internment camp and Boyle, seeing that Franckenstein’s plight

\textsuperscript{22} Boyle to Caresse Crosby, February 1940, quoted in Spanier 146.
was shared by millions of other people who were stateless refugees for political, religious, or racial reasons, became increasingly impatient with the fact that nobody—especially nobody in the U.S.—seemed to be interested in the fate of all these people. She started writing about it, in essays and short stories, and began sending those stories “back home,” so that Americans would look up and take notice of what was going on in Europe.

After the German invasion of France in May 1940, the situation got increasingly dangerous in the Haute Savoie, and, in 1941, Boyle and her family left France for the States via Lisbon. After her return to the U.S., Boyle continued even more fervently to write about the situation of the refugees in Europe, writing politically engaged (and sometimes also sentimental) novels dealing with the heroic fight of the French resistance and the plight of war refugees. In two of these, *Primer for Combat* and *1939*, Boyle demonstrates her thorough understanding of the legal and humanitarian consequences that spring from the binding of the “Rights of Man” to citizenship in a nation-state—an issue that Hannah Arendt discusses in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and that is of continuing relevance to (cosmo)political thinkers interested in the legal consequences attendant on forced displacement today. Since *1939* is concerned with a moment in the life of a stateless refugee that occurs prior to that depicted in *Primer for Combat*, I will discuss it first, despite its later publication date.23

*1939* is a short but complex novel that follows the lives of its two main protagonists—a married French-American woman and her Austrian lover—separately over

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23 Spanier also explains that Boyle began *1939* in the late thirties, but left it unfinished and completed it only almost a decade later, in 1948 (163).
the course of just one day. At the beginning of the novel, Corinne Audal, who has left her French husband to live with the Austrian ski-instructor Ferdl in the French mountains, goes through the routines of her first day without her lover. He, after the French declaration of war on Germany, has gone to enlist as a volunteer in the French army. Retrospectively, we learn that Ferdl is not a refugee in France but an expatriate, a labor migrant, who came, his mother explains, to France in 1934, “not twenty-two yet,” in order “to make his living” (85-6). Despite his decision to go away, the mother asserts, “he loved his country. He loved his people; he always wanted to come back to us” (86). Nevertheless, after a few years, even before the Anschluss, Ferdl had stopped coming back to Austria in the summers, a fact that his mother blames on Corinne. In her eyes, Ferdl “subverted” the honor of his Austrian family by falling in love with a foreigner, a married Frenchwoman, and abandoning his country for her. Nobody in the family is willing to understand such a bizarre choice, although Ferdl has done his best to explain to his sister that “he’d been away to other countries and he knew about other customs and the way things might happen without family or church or anything else coming into it” (99).

As a labor migrant and long-term expatriate, Ferdl is a transnational subject, a person who permanently lives in a foreign nation-state without completely giving up his original cultural or social allegiances. Having left the familiar certainties of his original community behind, and being well-versed in the language and culture of another country, Ferdl seems to also qualify as a cosmopolitan-in-process, but one who is torn apart by his conflicting attachments and loyalties to both individual people and count-
ries. He literally stands between two women, one his French lover Corinne and the other his possessive mother, and between the two countries that they represent for him—France and Austria. This difficult situation becomes even more complicated when he loses his Austrian citizenship as a result of the German annexation, which confronts him with two choices: either become a German citizen and be able to visit his mother, or become a French citizen and continue living with Corinne. We learn that he, rather opportunistically, tries to do both. He applies for French naturalization, but he also applies for a German passport in order to be able to meet his mother in Italy (to Nazi-Austria he does not want to go). He regrets and reverses the latter decision at the French-Italian border, however, where he understands that right now he is “an Austrian still; in spite of the Anschluss . . . until [he] let[s] them touch the passport of Germany and put their validation on it” (145). After a moment of hesitation, he tears his new passport into pieces.

This gesture of rebellion and refusal, however—which is, as Thomas Austenfeld points out, a “fundamental choice” in a “classic ethical dilemma” (54)—has severe consequences for Ferdl. Through his refusal to affirm Nazi Germany as his new country he becomes “a man without a country” (137), and, at the same time and regardless of his personal decision, the French declaration of war on Germany makes him—as an ex-Austrian—an “enemy alien” in France, and therefore unacceptable as a French citizen and not to be abided in that country. Ferdl’s ethical choice against Nazi Germany is thus, as Austenfeld puts it, in no way “rewarded” by France. On the cont-

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24 I’ll discuss just this experience in greater depth later, in dealing with William Gardner Smith’s novel *The Stone Face*. 
rary, as a friend of his explains to him, as a simple result of historical developments, his very personhood is in the process of disappearing.

There are probably several shapes and forms of disappearance, Ferdl. Whatever you were before has disappeared now with your civil status and the currency of your country. You are not Austrian; you are a foreigner with foreign papers committed to France now, asking France for a legal identity because your identity, like Austria’s, has been wiped off the slate. (131)

With the “disappearance” of the nation-state Austria, it is here explained matter-of-factly, Ferdl as a person has disappeared as well, at least as far as his position as a bearer of rights is concerned. The cynical observation that Boyle here puts into the mouth of one of her characters, describing the situation of the stateless individual, shows interesting parallels with German-Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt’s call for “the right to have rights,” made by Arendt as a result of her own experiences under Nazi rule.25

In her 1951 *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, originally written in English and published in the U.S., Arendt dedicates a whole chapter to “The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man.” There, she concerns herself with the problems inherent in a set of “universal” rights that can be claimed and enforced only by

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25 Arendt experienced firsthand what it means to be a stateless and multiply displaced individual. As a Jewish German, she had been confronted with many acts of discrimination even before she fled her native country for France in 1933, after having been temporarily arrested by the Nazis in Berlin. In 1937, her German citizenship was revoked. She continued to live in Paris, helping and supporting Jewish refugees. In 1940, after the German invasion of France, Arendt was arrested and put for five weeks into a concentration camp. In January 1941 she escaped with her mother and her second husband Heinrich Blücher to Lisbon, where she lived as a stateless refugee, waiting for her passage to the U.S. She and Blücher arrived in New York in May 1941, her mother shortly thereafter. In 1951, she became a naturalized American. *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was written, in English, in the U.S., and only later translated by herself into the German language.
individuals who hold “proper” citizenship in a nation-state. “The first World War,” she writes, “exploded the European community of nations beyond repair,” and the civil wars which followed it caused

migrations of groups who . . . were welcomed nowhere and could be assimilated nowhere. Once they had left their homelands they remained homeless, once they had left their state they remained stateless; once they had been deprived of their human rights they were rightless, the scum of the earth. (267)

In a climate of mutual hatred and “conflicting national claims,” Arendt goes on, “two victim groups emerged whose suffering were different from those of all others,” because “they had lost those rights which had been thought of and even defined as unalienable, namely the Rights of Man” (268). These two groups, according to Arendt, were “the stateless and the minorities” who “had no governments to represent and protect them and therefore were forced to live either under the law of exception of the Minority Treaties . . . or under conditions of absolute lawlessness” (268-9). Ferdl experiences something of the latter in Boyle’s 1939; though the law exists for him, he has ceased to exist for the law. Having lost his Austrian citizenship—and not being willing to accept the citizenship of Nazi-Germany—he finds himself in the “condition of absolute lawlessness,” in which his very personhood is being denied. The plight of people in his position, Arendt explains, “is not that they are not equal before the law, but that no law exists for them; not that they are oppressed, but that nobody wants to oppress them” (293). As French philosopher Jacques Rancière points out in his essay “Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man?” (2004), though, Arendt’s formulation here is somewhat bizarre, if not misleading, since “as a
matter of fact, there were people who wanted to oppress them and laws to do this. The conceptualization of a ‘state beyond oppression’ is much more a consequence of Arendt’s rigid opposition between the realm of the political and the realm of private life—what she . . . calls ‘the dark background of mere givenness’” (Rancière 299, emphasis mine). And indeed, looking at Ferdl’s situation in 1939, we cannot help but realize that his position as a stateless person who is nevertheless understood as an enemy alien does not mean that there is “no law” for him. On the contrary, French law insists that such individuals are to be put in internment camps, unless they prefer to join the Foreign Legion. In fact, then, there is a law over but not for Ferdl, since there are neither laws nor rights that he could claim for himself; with the loss of his state he has lost all rights of the citizen, but has not ceased to be subject to external legal formations.

Rancière points to Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben’s notion of homo sacer as offering an interesting alternative conceptualization to Arendt’s—one that draws on the work of Arendt herself and on Carl Schmitt’s notion of the ‘state of exception.’ In Schmitt’s understanding, a power is sovereign when it is in a position to declare the state of exception, a state which involves the suspension of all normal legality. Agamben, as Rancière explains, “identifies the state of exception as the power of decision over life” (300), in that it can reduce life to what Agamben calls ‘bare life.’ Homo sacer is such ‘bare life,’ excluded from the law, but nevertheless included under it at the same time. Agamben takes his term from ancient Roman law, in which homo sacer (sacred man) referred to an outlawed person: somebody who was

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not (yet) dead, but could be killed without punishment (although not sacrificed in a ritual ceremony). Such a person had no legal signification; he was a cipher before laws that nonetheless prevented him from acting freely. In Agamben’s understanding, then, bare life is human life that is “included in the juridical order solely in the form of its exclusion (that is, of its capacity to be killed)” (23), and the prime example for homo sacer and the bare life he leads is the concentration camp prisoner. At the moment at which a sovereign state takes away all legal rights from a person, and condemns her to existence in a concentration camp, the prisoner has become homo sacer—somebody who is still alive but can be killed without punishment at any time. The ‘human’ rights of this prisoner disappear with all his other rights, and, as Rancière points out, there is in fact “no more . . . opposition between absolute state power and the Rights of Man” (300). In his provocatively titled essay “Against Human Rights” (2006), Slavoj Žižek further explains the relation between Agamben’s concept of bare life and the basic problem of human rights:

It is precisely when a human being is deprived of the particular socio-political identity that accounts for his determinate citizenship that—in one and the same move—he ceases to be recognized or treated as human. Paradoxically, I am deprived of human rights at the very moment at which I am reduced to a human being ‘in general’, and thus become the ideal bearer of those ‘universal human rights’. (127)

We might put this paradox another way by noting that human rights cease to be useful to the individual at the precise moment when she needs them on her own behalf, as a pure individual. Up to this moment, human rights are more or less useful in ordering one’s existence as a recognized political entity—for arguing even under some of the most repressive regimes that one’s rights as a citizen must reflect one’s basic human
rights. The tragic irony is, as Žižek so aptly notes, that in the instant one is reduced to one’s basic humanity, one loses the capacity to lay effective claim to human rights.

The terrible consequences of this tragic irony—with different degrees of proximity and personal affectedness—both Arendt and Boyle experienced and witnessed during the early 1940s. “The concept of the Rights of Man,” Arendt writes, “based on the supposed existence of a human being as such, collapsed into ruins as soon as those who professed it found themselves for the first time before men who had truly lost every other specific quality and connection except for the mere fact of being humans” (280). And Boyle shows us in 1939 how the individual is affected by this collapse. With the loss of his Austrian citizenship, Ferdl also loses the accompanying socio-political identity as an Austrian, and, because there is no other citizenship available to him that he would feel able to accept, he, to use Žižek’s words again, “ceases to be recognized or treated as a human.” Here, we see how the stateless person may be the example par excellence of the sans papiers or “without-papers,” a term more frequently used to refer to undocumented foreign workers in France; in this appellation (as in the shorthand “illegal” for “illegal/undocumented immigrant” in the U.S. and elsewhere), all markers of personhood are removed, and all that is left is a juridical status. And that juridical status is a negation only, which is precisely the condition of the stateless person, of Ferdl.

If his friend Tarboux has told Ferdl earlier that “whatever he was before” is now in the process of disappearing, this same Tarboux later tells Corinne that, as “an enemy alien of military age,” Ferdl “doesn’t count as a man any more” (64, my
emphasis). With his valid Austrian passport in hand—back when there still was an Austria—Ferdl had been a citizen with rights and duties, even when he was living abroad. Being an Austrian citizen, he also had had certain inalienable rights in France. Without any such passport, however, the French government can—and in the novel does—make the sovereign decision that from now on he is “not a man” anymore; as Tarboux explains, once it has taken all other papers away, people like Ferdl are categorized solely as “suspects . . . not even men anymore, but suspects” (67). What happens to such ‘suspects’ in the French internment camps—keeping in mind that the idea of the camp as such was Agamben’s privileged site for the production and maintenance of bare life—Tarboux professes not to know, but he asserts that “in any Fascist country they’d have been shot the first week to save the food and the vital space” (67). Whether or not this will happen to Ferdl depends on many factors, but none involve his human rights. Those, he lost at the moment when he lost his citizenship and became a “mere” human. At the end of the novel, we do not know Ferdl’s fate either; as we leave him walking in the company of a gendarme towards an internment camp in the Isère Valley, his final thoughts resonate with the plight of interned suspects everywhere: “How long is it going to take me to get out?” (152). In the year 1939, there would have been no one in the whole world who could have answered that.

Boyle’s *Primer for Combat* concentrates on a later historical moment—the German occupation of France—and also on a later stage in the life of the stateless

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27 While Arendt and Agamben disagree on the nature of the concentration camp with regards to the political—for Arendt, the camp is the site where the political is negated; for Agamben, by contrast, it is the place where politics as the sovereign decision on life reveals itself in its purest form—they both understand it as the prime example for total deprivation of rights.
refugee and enemy alien. Set in the summer of 1940, the novel is presented as the “armistice diary” of Phyl, an American expatriate living with her husband Benchley and their children in the French mountains; and it features not one but two Austrian refugees, one being Phyl’s lover Wolfgang, the other her friend Sepp von Horneck. As Sandra Spanier remarks, with Phyl we have again a heroine who shares many traits with Boyle and Boyle’s own life at the time. Not only does Phyl have the same historical correspondence partners as Boyle, many of them quite prominent personages, she also shares with the author the facts that her first husband was French, that her current one is a cool-headed American, and that the man she is in love with is an Austrian skier (Spanier 159). What is different is that Phyl’s lover has chosen the French Foreign Legion over the internment camp when confronted with the two available choices for enemy aliens (Franckenstein chose the internment camp). Phyl’s friend Sepp von Horneck, on the other hand, who is a teacher of Latin and shares with Wolfgang not only an ex-nationality but also the resulting fate of statelessness, is at the beginning of the novel still hiding from the French officials in the mountains, trying to avoid both interment camp and Foreign Legion.

While Sepp von Horneck is a thinly disguised fictionalization of Joseph von Franckenstein, Wolfgang shares many characteristics with Kurt Wick, who was, for a while, Boyle’s lover and was, according to Boyle-biographer Joan Mellen, “a philanderer,” who “moved from a liaison with a Polish woman to Kay” (226). Sandra Spanier quotes a letter from Boyle to herself, in which Boyle makes clear that it is Sepp who represents Franckenstein, not Wolfgang. “He, that other Austrian,” she writes, meaning Kurt Wick, “went voluntarily (not against his will) into the Foreign Legion, while Joseph, refusing to apply for a Nazi-passport, chose to remain in internment camp” (Boyle quoted in Spanier 159). Kurt Wick is also, Joan Mellen tells us, the real-life inspiration for Ferdl in 1939; however, there are several of Ferdl’s traits (for example, his refusal to validate Nazi Germany) that do not completely accord with Wick’s rather cavalier opportunism. We might do better to regard Ferdl as a mélange, incorporating various aspects of both Wick and Franckenstein.
*Primer for Combat* is characterized by an oppressive and gloomy atmosphere, and, as Thomas Austenfeld reminds us, it is important to keep in mind that the novel was published in 1942, and that Boyle therefore at the time of writing the novel “was not aware of the events that would lead up to 1945, she did not yet know about the extent of the persecution of the Jews, she did not know about D-Day and the eventual Allied victory. For all she knew, fascist Germany was there to stay for the next thousand years” (56). Recording France’s tragic and bitter defeat by the “Thousand Year Reich,” Boyle uses the diary-mode of her novel to convey myriad details and shrewd political-historical observations; and, while she is interested in the lives of all the different people that history and fate have rounded up in this small village in the Haute-Savoie, the dissimilar destinies of the two stateless Austrians are Phyl’s (and Boyle’s) most passionate concern.

Phyl’s heart trembles when she reads in the French paper about “the rapidity with which the Fascist methods are being put into effect. First no Jews in the French army, navy, or government services; no men to be employed in any official service whose fathers were not French; and now, no doctors, pharmacists, or dentists may practice in France unless their fathers were Frenchmen” (237). As her friend Hans Arp tells her, “it was a vital necessity to read every newspaper in unoccupied France every day to be certain that one had not become overnight one of the category which no longer enjoys legal standing” (238). The apparent arbitrariness—guided by Nazi-ideology—with which Vichy France exercises its power over the lives of people living in its territory frightens all foreigners around Phyl, and she is quite aware of the fact
that even she herself, as a “foreign-born” woman who has “acquired French nationality through marriage” might “be declared by Vichy to be no longer French” and that her passport might be revoked (238). After all, the fact that Wolfgang is married to a Frenchwoman has not saved him from classification as an ‘enemy alien.’ The state of exception that prevails in France makes it a sheer impossibility to determine who is going to lose his citizen’s rights next and why.

Phyl therefore decides to act on behalf of those she loves and cares for, as long as she is still able to do so. On the one hand, she ponders what to do with her own family in this dangerous time. On the other hand, she engages herself passionately—accepting a good amount of risk for herself—on behalf of Wolfgang and Sepp, trying to get them the necessary paperwork to escape to the United States. With Wolfgang—who has already left France with the Foreign Legion at the opening of the story—Phyl can communicate only through letters; with Sepp, who is not inducted and is for most of the novel not interned, Phyl can talk personally whenever he comes down to the village or she hikes up to his chalet in the mountains. In both cases, though, Phyl is racing against time; in Sepp’s case because the likelihood that he will be found and arrested increases every day, and in Wolfgang’s case because his letters make clear that he is—especially after being transferred from Portugal to the Sahara—increasingly disintegrating, both psychically and physically.

Phyl thus starts traveling within France and across the French-Swiss border—by bike, bus and on foot—to institutions that might be able to help her and her charges

29 Here, incidentally, we also see how varied cosmopolitan attachments can complicate or even make impossible one’s originary attachments. We might well take note of the fact that many of Boyle’s heroines, including Phyl, express a sense of themselves as French—even those who are not so by birth.
to get the passports and visas that would transform them into rightful citizens again. She soon learns that what she is hoping for is a very difficult thing to achieve, but that does not stop her; after all, she and Wolfgang are planning a new life together once they both have made it to the United States. Her engagement for Sepp, on the other hand, springs from friendship and an admiration for his stubborn integrity. The fact that Sepp is willing to face the internment camp rather than become a collaborator of any stripe impresses Phyl profoundly. But the consul, a practical man in Franco’s Spain, reminds her that she must not tell him such things: “It is all well for the English and the Americans to know what your friend believes, but it is not so good for the Spanish. We are not interested in ideas like these” (270). After this admonishment, however, he hands her the necessary papers, and Phyl has taken one more step on the path that eventually will lead to Sepp’s escape from France to England.

When Phyl is searched by a female French official at her reentry into France, and the woman finds Sepp’s Austrian passport and the accompanying letter saying “On His Majesty’s Service,” she gives Phyl a look. “Those are for a friend,” Phyl confides, and

without a word, but as though I had suddenly and for the first time spoken a language that was familiar to her, she put them back into the rucksack’s outer pocket.
‘Then they are sacred,’ she said when the little white strap was buckled over.
When we got outside, the officials asked her what she had found, and she said she had found nothing at all. (304)

Another instance of female solidarity, in this case between complete strangers, this little moment points to the cosmopolitan undertone that informs Boyle’s novel, despite
all the talk about nations and patriotic feelings that pervade *Primer to Combat* as much as *1939*. What the two women share in this moment is the understanding that someone’s life is at stake, someone who does not have any rights to claim anymore for himself; and that someone else, in this case of a (doubly) different nationality, is risking her own imprisonment to help that person stay alive and becoming a person again. In a sense, then, we might say that the official has recognized Sepp as *homo sacer*, but with the polarity reversed. Why? Because he is a friend. The even deeper recognition here is that of personal emotional ties, even when they run contrary to national imperatives. A true cosmopolitan at this particular moment, the official forgets her “patriotic” duties to Vichy France and thus saves two lives.

Political scientist Thomas Pogge addresses almost precisely this issue in a 1992 article, “Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty”:

> For nearly every human being, and for almost every piece of territory, there is exactly one government with preeminent authority over, and primary responsibility for, this person or territory. And each person is thought to owe primary political allegiance and loyalty to this government with preeminent authority over him or her. . . . From the standpoint of cosmopolitan morality – which centers on the fundamental needs and interests of individual human beings, and of all human beings – this concentration of sovereignty at one level is no longer defensible. (178)

And while Pogge goes on to argue for a different organization of state sovereignty—the *political* and *legal* lesson to draw from the proven negative effects of total nation-state sovereignty—Boyle focuses in her novels on the lessons of cosmopolitan morality that the *individual* must learn from the catastrophe of WWII. Phyl does inhabit this standpoint and so does the unnamed woman at the French border. The same is the case
for Sepp, who is, after Phyl, the true if somewhat hidden hero of the novel. Wolfgang, on the other hand, proves to be a bitter disappointment. In a letter to Phyl, he writes at the last that he is going to trust his French wife’s military and diplomatic connections to Vichy France much more than Phyl’s efforts, since, after all, she is American at heart, and does not understand these things very well. Wolfgang’s selfish and opportunistic stance here contrast(s) sharply with Sepp’s stubborn integrity, and it is clear that not only Phyl’s but also the author’s sympathies are with the latter (who, as Boyle did reveal in a letter to Sandra Spanier, was modeled after Joseph von Franckenstein).  

The question of individual moral integrity in the face of catastrophe looms large in Primer for Combat, as do personal and national honor. Both Spanier and Austenfeld point to Boyle’s remarkable appeal—on the backside of the dust cover of the novel—to Americans to buy war bonds. At first blush, this seems a rather decidedly uncospolitan gesture. Supporting such a reading, we see Boyle using her firsthand knowledge of the situation in Europe as a marker of expertise to explain that I have seen what can happen to the lives of men and women in defeated countries. It is our responsibility to see that this does not happen here [meaning the U.S.]. But it is not enough merely to believe this, however profoundly, or to make statements about it, or to write books attempting to make it clear. There are actual things to be done.”  

The “actual things to be done” are the individual (financial) engagement of Americans in the war against the fascist European war parties. Boyle here not only affirms the morality of American involvement in the war (the book was published after the entry of U.S. forces in WWII), but also emphasizes the importance of personal engagement

30 Boyle to Spanier, 16 August 1981, quoted in Spanier, 159
31 Boyle quoted in Austenfeld, 58
beyond mere talking (or writing). And while Austenfeld certainly has a point when he speculates that Boyle’s “deep expatriatism in Europe brought with it a fresh awareness of the real-life implications of national identity” (59), the nature of her awareness of these real-life implications is worth a second glance.

Anthony Appiah offers the somewhat less than radical assertion in *The Ethics of Identity* (2005) that rooted cosmopolitanism might well include a certain sense of responsibility toward non-nationals. “Indeed,” he writes, “it’s a notable fact that you can experience a sense of special responsibility toward nationals who are not co-nationals” (242). A historical example of such engagement is, according to Appiah, “the International Brigade, who, alongside the republicans, fought the Falangists during the Spanish Civil War: here, a fight for universal principles—a fight against fascism—usually came to entail more local forms of identification. . . . One’s national loyalties aren’t determined solely by the geography of one’s nativity” (242).³² At first glance, Boyle’s engagement in France seems to perfectly fit Appiah’s—and not my—definition of ‘rooted cosmopolitanism.’ As Appiah and others use the term, it relies on a concept of rootedness that, as I have attempted to show in the first section of this chapter, is perhaps insufficiently true to the metaphor itself. And, at a second glance, we cannot help but notice that Boyle’s cosmopolitan engagement was always messier than the abstractly principled version Appiah presents.

Despite her considerable admiration for the fervent passion of certain nationalisms (especially the Austrian and French) and her subscription to various moral

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³² The implication being that one’s national loyalties are *mostly* determined by precisely that. Appiah’s presentation here relies on a belief that nearness and dearness must *normally* result from co-nationality, that roots are a function primarily of place and only secondarily of person or principle.
values and principles, her reaching beyond national constraints on selfhood was not, by and large, based on application to or of some universal principle. Rather, it was very often a direct result of personal considerations, of her absolute implication in the emotional messiness of a life lived across national boundaries. As Sandra Spanier repeatedly notes, Boyle’s highest value was connection between human beings, a value that consistently and necessarily led her away from abstract principles and toward moral-affective concerns. It is also a value that may throw into question the very idea of a “pure” cosmopolitanism. We see the intersection of emotion and the political in a particular interesting fashion in Boyle’s other two novels of the mid-40s: *Avalanche* (1944) and *A Frenchman Must Die* (1946).

Both of these are sentimental, “potboiler” novels that Boyle wrote about the French resistance. The first, *Avalanche*, is marked by the dual (and perhaps dually dubious) distinction of being at the same time both Boyle’s greatest commercial success and the book that ruined her reputation as a serious writer of “literature.” Set in the early 1940s, *Avalanche* is, in Spanier’s words, “a spy thriller leavened by liberal dashes of romance and rally-to-the-cause patriotism” (161). And nobody could summarize the novel more pointedly than did Edmund Wilson in a 1962 review:

A blond heroine, half French, half American, who fled France when the Germans came, returns to work with a relief committee and becomes involved in the underground movement in the mountains in the Haute-Savoie. The villain is a Gestapo agent masquerading as a Swiss clock manufacturer, who sneers at the French so openly . . . that the reader is at first led to think that this character must himself be a French patriot masquerading as a German spy, and is later impelled to

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33 *Avalanche* appeared first as a serialized novel in the *Saturday Evening Post*, a fact that has, among other things, noticeable effects on the plot structure of the book.
wonder how he has ever held down his job. The hero, Bastineau, leader of the mountain resistance, combines the glamour of Charles Boyer with the locomotive proficiency of Superman. (Wilson 128).

Even if we subtract some of Wilson’s witty spite, this does not sound exactly like a novel pervaded by a cosmopolitan spirit. Reading the book, one may not only understand Wilson’s indignation at Boyle’s style, but also wonder if Boyle’s cosmopolitan process perhaps suffered a temporary breakdown as a result of the stressful war years. As clearly as the characters are divided into heroes and villains, they are attached to national labels: France and America for the heroes, Germany for the bad guys. Boyle herself, however, defended both Avalanche and her second potboiler book A Frenchman Must Die rather eloquently, and the nature of her defense is important in our context: “I wanted those two books,” she writes in a personal letter to Sandra Spanier, “far more than any of my others—to reach as great a number of Americans as possible, and so I wrote them, and without apology, for the Saturday Evening Post.”

The reaching of Americans, the conveyance of her political message, Boyle makes clear here, was more important to her than the effects that a deeply sentimental spy thriller might have on her reputation as a “serious” writer. If we remember that in 1928, Boyle had signed a manifesto that declared that “the plain reader be damned,” we can hardly assume that she did not know in what trouble she might get herself as an artist, writing a novel that tried to warm the hearts of its readers for the heroic struggle of the French resistance fighters against Nazi-Germany. If Edmund Wilson’s detrimental critique upset and annoyed her—and it did—that was most of all because

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34 Boyle to Spanier, 14, August 1981, quoted in Spanier 163.
he obviously did not understand in the least what she was trying to do, politically. Boyle was—like Pearl S. Buck, who faced very similar allegations throughout her career—a highly political writer, not in spite of, but in part because of her repeated use of sentimental elements in her novels. As Jane Tompkins argues of Harriet Beecher Stowe in *Sensational Designs* (1985)—“sentimentality in Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was not ineffective; to the contrary, the novel exercised enormous power over cultural history” (4)—emotional approaches to the hearts of readers can exercise an enormous power with respect to political concerns. If Stowe’s book managed to start a war, as Abraham Lincoln once asserted, Kay Boyle seems to have attempted to stop one; and if she was less dramatically successful in terms of results than her famous predecessor, this does not make her efforts worthless or ridiculous. Even the fact that materialistic concerns (such as that of feeding a family) also played an important role in Boyle’s decision to write popular novels takes nothing away from her political intentions.

One might thus forgive her the almost outrageously stereotypical Germans, Frenchmen, and Americans that populate *Avalanche*. Her attempt to somehow get the American public emotionally involved in what was happening in Europe was, like the note on the back of *Primer for Combat*, one of her ways of doing something about the catastrophe she was witnessing. Coterminous with—and informing—her efforts to do something about the catastrophe were her efforts to save her own loved ones from

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36 Incidentally, one suspects—and rather hopes—that a similar set of motivations are at play in some of Martha Nussbaum’s rhetorical choices in *For Love of Country*? and in her most recent book, *Liberty of Consciences: In Defense of America’s Tradition of Religious Equality* (2007), where she highlights the importance of a specifically American tradition of religious pluralism.
it. While she was not able to prevent Joseph von Franckenstein’s internment in one of the French camps, she—as well as her husband and her mother—did what they could to help Franckenstein get to the U.S. after his release from the camp in 1941. The fact that in Primer for Combat, Phyl breaks her adopted country’s laws in order to help a friend point to an important tension between Boyle’s belief in the moral authority of (good) nation-states, and her equally strong belief in the need for individuals to act against the laws of sovereign nation-states when the latter act immorally. This tension corresponds with the notion of the ‘double gesture,’ as Bonnie Honig has theorized it in the context of cosmopolitanism.

Honig draws—as so many theorists discussed here—on the thought of Hannah Arendt, and sets her work in conversation with that of Jacques Derrida on the topic of cosmopolitanism and hospitality.37 “Derrida’s distinction between the unconditional and the conditional,”38 with regards to hospitality, Honig suggests might illuminate from a new angle Arendt’s famous call for the right to have rights. This is a call in the name of an unconditional order of rights, something that is quite distinct, as she herself makes clear . . . from such tables of rights as universal human rights, the Rights of Man, or EU charters. The right to have rights is itself a double gesture: it is a reproach to any particular order of rights . . . and a demand that everyone should belong to such an order. A double gesture is necessary because, paradoxically, we need rights because we cannot trust the political communities to which we belong to treat us with dignity and respect; however, we depend for our rights on those very same political communities. (106-7)

38 According to Derrida, unconditional hospitality is an incalculable justice and conditional hospitality suggests a calculable law. This implies that unconditional hospitality cannot be imposed on or enacted by the nation-state, since the nation-state necessarily functions with the help of a calculating logic. The attempt to bring into being an incalculable justice would, in Derrida’s view, imply a confusion of unconditional and conditional, of justice and law.
Honig here discerns a possible strategy of coping with the most problematic feature of universal rights in a world of nation-states: that while the defense of those human rights necessarily lies with nation-states, we, cannot count on any nation-state to always defend our rights faithfully. “The unconditional—Arendt’s rights to have rights,” Honig continues, “is a way of marking the fact that no armory of rights (conditional, contingent), no matter how broad or developed or secure, can represent the subject’s absolute value in the intersubjective, contingent realm of rights-adjudication” (107). There is no way out of this paradox, Honig asserts, but as possible mode for dealing with it productively, she suggests a double gesture—using human rights as a reproach to any particular order of rights that does not safeguard them and, at the same time, “demanding that everyone should belong to such an order”—i.e., insisting that no person be considered stateless, and therefore rightless.

While Honig—like Thomas Pogge—concerns herself with this question of cosmopolitan morality from the perspective of institutional development, Boyle urges a similar double gesture for individuals in their own relations to nation-states.39 The double gesture that Honig describes posits the institutional characteristics of the nation-state as necessary for the achievement of cosmopolitan aims, and at the same time urges also the necessity of supra-national institutions to make up for the guaranteed unreliability of the nation-state. The double gesture that we see in the life and work of Kay Boyle involves a belief in and reliance on the capability of nation-states to act in the framework and on the behalf of human rights, while at the same time relying on individuals to transcend the nation-state in their moral attachments and to

39 Which falls, as Pogge explains, in the realm of “legal cosmopolitanism.”
act accordingly as necessary. Thus, on the one hand, Boyle advocates the support of nation-states (as for example in her appeal to buy war bonds) to strengthen their abilities to act in the name of cosmopolitan morality. And, on the other hand, when the nation-state fails to act morally, as it inevitably will, it is the duty of the individual to act from a personal moral sense—often against the dictates of both the nation-state and the national sense of morality. This notion of Boyle’s is not only expressed in her admiration of resistance fighters, but also in her later political activism against social and political evils in U.S. American domestic and foreign policy. We can draw a straight line, I would suggest, between the spirit that pervades her novels of the ‘40s and the fact that 25 years later, she was—at the age of 62—confined to a Californian detention center for civil disobedience. Boyle’s concern, as many scholars have pointed out, always lay with the needs, duties, and potentials of the individual in her relations with other people. And her cultural-political efforts were aimed primarily at fostering a spirit of responsibility and engagement—through and beyond the nation—on behalf of others, be they co-nationals or not.

All this, then, we learn from Boyle, is made possible by a subscription to the notion of intersubjectivity in its strongest sense—the understanding that shared cognition and consensus are essential in the shaping of our own identity as well as our relation to others. The ‘pure,’ radically detached Cynic cosmopolitan—insofar as we are ever able to find him—is a problematic and unhappy individual exactly because he sees himself as inhabiting a private and self-defined world, a notion that he shares, paradoxically, with a lot of non-cosmopolitan individualists. It should be clear, at this
point, that solipsism is not the ideal starting point for a theory and praxis of universal connection. While an initial ‘deracination’—a movement away from one’s habitues and habitual places, and a confrontation with cultures, people and habits radically different from one’s own—may well be a necessary first step for truly cosmopolitan development, such development afterwards implies an active, constantly changing process. It is a lived practice that continually and repeatedly involves new moments of detachment and reattachment. Roots, on this view, are something that the successful cosmopolitan learns to transplant from one soil to another—with varying results, depending on the quality, suitability and compatibility of each new soil.

If the lonely cosmopolitan that Martha Nussbaum describes permanently lives in “something like exile,” Boyle’s exceptionality resides in her ability to go beyond that exile—to not ‘abort’ her development (falling back into nationalism), as many of her contemporaries did. In her refusal to abandon the simultaneous movements of attachment and detachment, she came to inhabit what I have, at the beginning of this chapter, termed the fifth stage of cosmopolitanism-in-process: desiring a new form of belonging that transcends not only nation and family, but also narrowly defined interpersonal love (although she could hardly be said to have ever lost her interest in romance). This stage, then, with its turn toward a complex sociality, emerges as one possible lesson of the failure of detached Cynic cosmopolitanism. As her later life and much of her writing shows, this is a lesson that Kay Boyle, to a great extent, learned.

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40 Although it should be emphasized here that Nussbaum says this with her usual provocative undertone, and that she, in all of her writings on cosmopolitanism, favors the Stoic concept of multiple attachments, and not the Cynic one.
After WWII, Boyle returned to Europe, this time to post-war Germany, where Franckenstein (who had now become her husband and thus an American citizen) was stationed as a member of the U.S. Civilian Occupation Forces, and she herself was working as a correspondent for The New Yorker. In 1952, however, both were accused of “un-American” activities and Frankenstein was brought before a consular panel for a McCarthy-style loyalty hearing. The charges against her husband were vague, but Boyle herself was unambiguously accused of “having sponsored or endorsed six subversive organizations and of being a Communist Party member” (Spanier 176). As a result, The New Yorker withdrew Boyle’s accreditation and her husband lost his job with the Civilian Occupation Forces. After this—to a large extent groundless—degradation, Franckenstein wanted to remain in Europe, but, as we learn from Boyle biographer Joan Mellen, “Kay Boyle was determined to fight” (368-69). As she wrote in The Nation, “This is one of the times in history when one must go back and speak out with those of the other America clearly and loudly enough so that even Europe will hear”; and as she wrote in a letter to her friend Nancy Cunard, she felt she needed to help “fight the evil that has spread like a disease throughout America” (both cited in Mellen 369). Evil, it seems, had now relocated to the United States. And, just as she had felt compelled to urge Americans to fight the evil of Nazi Germany during the Second World War, she now felt compelled herself to fight the twin evils of insularity and exclusion that gripped the Cold War U.S.—and that, she knew from experience, could certainly spread if not stopped there.
Thus, embittered but far from broken, Boyle began teaching at American universities: first at the University of Delaware, and then at San Francisco State. She and her husband also fought unflinchingly his dishonorable dismissal from the diplomatic services, until he was, in 1962, reinstated with apologies (Spanier 179). Despite—or perhaps because of—her bitter feelings toward the U.S., Boyle spent the remaining 40 years of her life as an engaged American citizen, and a committed and politically active cosmopolitan. The door of her house in San Francisco, as Spanier points out, “was always open to those whose struggles she supported: blacks, American Indians, students in dissent, pacifists, and ‘those who work for the liberation of all groups and peoples’” (198). And, as always, she lived out her cosmopolitanism in her writing as well as in her actions. In her essays in *The Long Walk at San Francisco State* (1969) and *Four Visions of America* (1977), as well as in her autobiographical novel *The Underground Woman* (1973), Boyle wrote about social and political topics that concerned her and chronicled her own experiences as a political activist during the 1960s and ‘70s. In her piece “Report from Lock-up,” published in *Four Visions of America*, Boyle portrays her time in the California detention center to which she had been committed after her arrest at an anti-war sit-in at the Army Induction Center in Oakland in 1968. At some point, she reports to us, she—who was, as I mentioned earlier, 62 years old at the time—was asked by one of the other inmates about the reason for her presence in the detention center.

“What you in for?” she asked, and because of the nebulous dimensions of my crime, I lowered my eyes before her gaze.

“For demonstrating,” I said. “I’m serving thirty-one days, on weekends and holidays. That’s so I won’t lose my job.”
“Demonstrating about what?”
“Well, a lot of us sat on the steps of the Induction Center in Oakland. . . We were demonstrating against the war in Vietnam.”
“Against the war in Vietnam,” she said, her voice gone high in incredulity. “Ain’t you never heard of national honor?” (26).

This woman was, it seems, a part of the other America with which Boyle had returned to speak—whether from the steps of induction centers or in jail. Boyle’s “honor,” after all, was anchored in something much more encompassing—both on the level of principle and the level of personal attachment—than the nation. It was based in a sense of oneself as a world citizen in the fullest sense, the sense in which one holds and acts on real and meaningful obligations to the world at large. As in the case of her anti-war protests, such a mode of honor, if such it may be called, at times directly conflicted with what more nationally inclined people consider “national honor.” To recall the notion of the double gesture, however, this in no way prevented Boyle from seeing the nation-state as a potentially useful tool for moral action in the real world. It is just that she was never willing to be confined to national visions of morality. The nation-state, she was well aware, often needed to be reminded of how moral action—directed toward a worldwide good—should actually look.

“I’m a rootless man,” Richard Wright declares boldly in *White Man Listen!* (1957), “but I’m neither psychologically distraught nor in any wise particularly perturbed because of it” (xxix). With this audacious statement, Wright claims for himself, and decidedly embraces, the status of the rootless cosmopolitan, the man who does not “hanker after, and seem[s] not to need, as many emotional attachments, sustaining roots, or idealistic allegiances as most people” (xxix). This radical emotional independence, Wright “confesses” to his reader, is by no means a coincidence, nor is it a “personal achievement” of his (xxix). Instead, he has “been shaped to this mental stance by the kind of experiences that [he has] fallen heir to” (xxix). His historical situatedness, Wright argues, as a black man in racist America—an American who does not “belong” to the American community—and as a foreigner experiencing the French and African political climates of the 1950s, has produced in him an outlook that rejects tradition and community in favor of a rootless cosmopolitanism. This brand of cosmopolitanism, with its insistence on detachment, distance and radical independence is, as we have seen earlier, a typically Cynic stance. In my discussion of Kay Boyle’s early work, I observed how, in praxis, this kind of cosmopolitanism is very difficult to sustain, *precisely because* of its lack of emotional connection. Richard Wright’s life and work, as we will see, further support this criticism of the Cynic position. While Wright proudly declared that as a rootless man he was perfectly able and happy to “make
[him]self at home almost anywhere on this earth” (WML, xxix), the practical enactment of this profession of self turned out to be much more difficult than he had hoped.

If aspects of Wright’s life and work thus strengthen my claim that enacting a Cynic brand of cosmopolitanism is painful to the point of impossibility, it is even more interesting that his actions and writings as a whole were actually quite inconsistent with his repeated proclamations of radical independence. Regardless of the Cynic ‘outbreaks’ noted in the preceding paragraph, overall, Wright embraced a much more Stoic brand of cosmopolitanism. That is, starting from a necessarily specific geo-historical position, he worked for human solidarity across national and racial boundaries. While in Boyle’s case there seems to have been a nearly linear development from a more Cynic to a more Stoic cosmopolitanism, Wright seems to have repeatedly declared or professed one while living and often writing about the other. If he kept insisting—in a sometimes almost enraged manner—on his radical independence from all attachments, he at the same time lived and advocated solidarity across national and racial boundaries. Rather than condemning such inconsistencies in a person’s cosmopolitan development as failures or evidence of dishonesty, I argue throughout this dissertation that we must consider them a necessary and nearly inevitable part of the cosmopolitan endeavor, and should understand cosmopolitanism as a permanent, “in-process” pursuit, involving moments of detachment as well as such of re-attachment.¹

In Wright’s case, however, the disparity between a declared non-allegiance and lived allegiances is particularly profound. As we will see, his Cynic outbursts had a lot to do with his very conflicted feelings toward America, the ‘home’ country that he passionately loved and despised at the same time. It was with respect to this particular country that he proclaimed his radical independence. When he said he was free of all attachments, he often was insisting most on being free of America, the country that had rejected him as a full citizen and a whole human being. At the same time, most of his fiction and non-fiction work of the 1950s, which will be the focus of this chapter, emphasizes not autonomy but, contrariwise, the primary importance of human solidarity and connection.

Such connection and solidarity, Wright argues quite consistently in all of these very different books, can only be achieved if one persistently “question[s] [one]self, [one’s] assumptions” (*Black Power* 163). Man cannot exist alone and independently from others, we learn in much of Wright’s fiction of the 50s—particularly in *The Outsider* (1954) and the to-this-day-unpublished “Island of Hallucination” (1959). And, in order to really acknowledge the Other on its own terms, we must, as Wright argues in *White Man Listen* (1956), take our own “passions . . . illusions . . . and circumstances into account” and be constantly willing to adjust our pre-judgments accordingly (48). Such a position strongly recalls Hans-Georg Gadamer’s understanding of the (inter-cultural) conversation, which I considered in chapter 2, and Richard Wright’s life and writings can help us to better comprehend not only why being cosmopolitan is so difficult, but also why conversation in the Gadamerian sense is helpful in alleviating, per-
haps even partially overcoming that difficulty. Conversing with an Other, both Gada-
mer and Wright believe, can help us meet the challenge of becoming at least partially
conscious of our own historical situatedness, our own ideological interpellation. Such
awareness, in turn, has at least the potential to help us change something about either
our own position or about the situation we are in.

Wright’s was historically situated, as a black man in 20th-century America, to
be an insider-outsider. And as such he was prepared for the kind of border thinking
that Mignolo considers the prerequisite for a critical cosmopolitanism not determined
(and thereby made un-cosmopolitan) by the hegemonic center, makes his under-stand-
ing of the intercultural conversation all the more interesting.\(^2\) His insider-outsider
position in his home country—what he called his “double vision,” in a nod to W.E.B.
DuBois’ notion of double consciousness—certainly helped spark Wright’s cosmopo-
litan development. And while his experience of insider-outsiderness initially resulted
from subjection to American racism, Wright’s life as an expatriate outsider in French
and, to some extent, Ghanaian and other societies placed him on new margins. In
addition to making him an outsider on first a national and then a cultural basis, his
expatriation also offered opportunities for conversations that would shift Wright’s
identity by challenging his very experience of marginalization in his original ‘home’
context. However, his expatriation also distanced him further still from American
society, including the black community with which he still felt some identification and

\(^2\) As I have explained in chapter 1, border thinking, according to Mignolo, allows for “the recognition
and transformation of the hegemonic imaginary from the perspectives of people in subaltern positions”
(736).
which now saw him, by and large, as having abandoned the struggle. Thus, his marginalization was deepened and broadened, but also shifted, as he became both more and less a part of his ‘own’ culture, and a part—but only in part—of ever more cultures.

Wright's life and works not only offer a non-hegemonic perspective on the Gadamerian intercultural conversation, but also exemplify the crucial roles of insider-outsiderness and of repeated ideological interpellations in the production and perpetuation of a cosmopolitan outlook. Kwame Anthony Appiah is right when he says that “there’s a sense in which cosmopolitanism is the name not of the solution but of the challenge” (xv), and Wright shows us most impressively just how great that challenge can be. In his rhetorical and physical abandonment of the United States, Wright declared himself a citizen of the world with a radicalism paralleled or even approached by few other American intellectuals. The degree to which he struggled to psychically leave behind that same United States illustrates the complexities, difficulties, and in-process nature of cosmopolitan practice.

**Richard Wright’s Cosmopolitan Contradictions**

Weary of the increasingly hostile racial climate in the United States, Wright and his family had accepted in 1946 an invitation by the French ministry of culture to stay for a year in Paris. After facing more racist harassment at home, much of it cen-

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3 This estrangement from the American public in general and from the black community in particular have recently been given a new treatment by Hazel Rowley in “The ‘Exile’ Years? How the ‘50s Culture Wars Destroyed Richard Wright” (2006). Rowley maintains that “It was one thing to hail Wright as a talented black son in his own house, but Americans did not expect this black man to stride out through the front door. The black community tended to regard Wright as a deserter” (15). Tyler Stovall similarly asserts in *Paris Noir* (1996) that “in criticizing America from Paris, Wright had crossed the Rubicon” (221)
tered on his interracial marriage to Ellen Poplar, daughter of Jewish Polish immigrants, he decided to move his family permanently to the French capital the following year. Wright was welcomed in Paris as a famous African American writer, and the city, in his own words, was characterized by “such an absence of race hate that it seem[ed] a little unreal.” Soon, Wright was joined by other African Americans, many of them ex-soldiers taking advantage of the G.I. Bill, and he quickly became one of the leading figures of this “new lost generation” that included James Baldwin, Chester Himes, Ollie Harrington and many other popular African American writers and artists. All of them were fleeing a social atmosphere in the U.S. that was poisonous with racial discrimination and anti-communist propaganda and persecution.

In Paris, they were able to escape such harassment, while immersing themselves in one of the major contact-zones of the Pan-African movement. As Brent Hayes Edwards has shown in *The Practice of Diaspora* (2003), for all its imperfections, Paris “allowed boundary crossing, conversations, and collaborations that were available nowhere else to the same degree” (4). Wright was very much a part of these conversations and collaborations, which were deeply concerned with the joint struggle of black and African people against Western oppression. Not wanting to be confined in the identity of an American protest writer who writes about nothing else but the black experience in the U.S., he turned his attention in the 1950s increasingly away from the U.S., and toward international politics, especially the Pan-African and decolonization movements. As Kevin Gaines observes, however, in a 2001 article,

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4 Wright quoted in Michel Fabre, 1973, 306.
Wright’s position in the Pan-African movement was complicated by the fact that he was critical of “Negritude, the politically charged assertion by some Francophone African nationalists of a transhistorical, transnational black cultural unity” (2001, 76, my emphasis). Wright rejected such black essentialism in favor of “modern” (non-primordial) political coalitions, and, in the same vein, found at times close allies in certain of France’s (white) intelligentsia.

These new and ‘foreign’ influences on his writing were regarded by many of Wright’s black friends and critics in the U.S. as particularly problematic, if not dangerous, for his career. As Wright’s biographer Hazel Rowley tells us in a recent article, “letter after letter” addressed to Wright in the 1940s and 50s carried the message that it would be best for him to give up his exile, and to come back ‘home,’ to the United States of America, to write about the topics he knew and understood.6 And it was not only people back in the U.S. who were concerned about Wright’s intellectual reorientation. His co-expatriates in Paris had qualms as well. James Baldwin, for example, took Wright’s sudden and premature death in 1960 at the age of 52 as incentive to speculate publicly about “the uses and hazards of expatriation.” Some of Wright’s former friends in the expatriate community in France, Baldwin argues, felt that he had perhaps been away too long from “home,” that he had made a mistake by “cut[ting]...

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6 Hazel Rowley, “The ‘Exile’ Years? How the 50’s Culture Wars Destroyed Richard Wright,” *Bookforum* (Dec/Jan 2006). http://www.bookforum.com/archive/dec_05/rowley.html, accessed on April 22, 2008. Rowley argues that this general insistence on Wright’s being ‘in exile’ in France has been hypocritical, as well as that it is “a parochial notion to suppose that being away from home means being in exile.” After, all, for writers such as Wright, as we learn from his literature of the 1930s and 40s, “exile begins at home.” It is important to note, though, that Wright himself insisted on his being in exile, for example in the unpublished essay “I Chose Exile,” and in his unpublished novel “Island of Hallucination” (which I discuss later in this chapter), in which he writes of his protagonist that “exiled, he lived on his silent island,” the silent island being his own hermetical, made-up world (76).
himself off from his roots” (Baldwin 1961, 203). Many of them, like Baldwin himself, particularly “distrusted his association with the French intellectuals, Sartre, de Beauvoir, and company,” because it seemed to them “that there was very little they could give him which he could use” (1961,184). American peers at home as well as abroad, then, suspected that Wright’s race-transcending contact to the French existentialists had corrupted, if not destroyed, the authenticity of his black vision. His bold declarations of (racial) rootlessness in his later writings certainly did not help things. Baldwin remembers how an African had once told him “with a small, mocking laugh: ‘I believe he thinks he's white’” (1961, 203).

For a long time, this has been the dominant understanding of Wright’s overall development as a writer: working his way up from illiterate farm boy to most influential black writer in the world, Wright reached a zenith in the late 1930s and early to mid-1940s, and after that, contemporaneous with his expatriation, started his artistic and personal decline. Wright’s oft-professed lack of roots has, in this context, often been understood as symptomatic of the identity crisis that necessarily resulted from his self-chosen exile. In a now-dated essay on Wright’s 1954 Black Power, Anthony Appiah argues that the writer’s trip to the Gold Coast was “yet another quest for a place of his own,” a quest that failed miserably (1987,188). In Appiah’s understanding, Wright’s rejection of “a racial explanation”—his unwillingness to commit to the idea of an essential Negritude—made it impossible for him to go to Africa on grounds of racial commonality, and without those grounds, he fell prey to a “paranoid herme-
neutics”: the need to distance himself from the black “natives” in Western (white) arrogance, embracing thereby the logic of his own oppressor (188).

Between then and now, this outright dismissal of *Black Power* and others of Wright’s later works has of course been challenged. Defenses of Wright’s later works date at least as far back, for example, as Cedric Robinson’s claiming of Wright as a major thinker within the Western Marxist tradition (in his 1983 *Black Marxism*). Nonetheless, as Hazel Rowley reminds us, over the years Wright has been most frequently associated with the three books he wrote in his thirties, before he left the United States for France in 1946: *Uncle Tom’s Children*, *Black Boy*, and *Native Son.* And even now, long after Paul Gilroy’s decisive intervention 1993’s *The Black Atlantic*, critical judgment on Wright’s later work is changing only very slowly. Of those critics who have discussed Wright’s later work with appreciation, many build on Gilroy’s assertion that Wright was a major thinker of Western modernity, seeking “complex answers to the questions which racial and national identities could only obscure” (Gilroy 1993, 173). Kevin Gaines, for instance, reconsiders Wright from the perspective of diaspora. In his 2001 “Revisiting Richard Wright in Ghana: Black Radicalism and the Dialectics of Diaspora,” Gaines asks us to see Wright as a proponent of a black diaspora that does not follow the more “conventional usage” of “describing a state of alienation resulting from a physical exile or displacement from an ancestral homeland” (77). Instead, Gaines suggests, Wright’s discussion of anticolonialism in *Black Power* and *The Color Curtain* (1956) “recasts diaspora as the mobilization of black moder-

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nity toward a transnational and transracial community of struggle” (76). Although stressing, like Gilroy, the transnational and transracial aspects of Wright’s thinking, Gaines does not take up Gilroy’s claim, expressed in both *The Black Atlantic* and *Against Race* (2000), that Wright’s outlook was cosmopolitan, preferring instead, with Brent Hayes Edwards, the concept of black diaspora.

While diaspora—a key concept for contemporary African American Studies in general—and cosmopolitanism share some overlap in their positions relative to the nation, both suggesting the transcendence of national boundaries in favor of broader solidarities, they are quite different concepts. Diaspora, as Edwards understands it, “raises issues of community beyond the nation-state which are unavoidably fractured by difference.” Cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, constitutes, in its ideal form, a global and indiscriminate solidarity that is not defined by any specific community, instead reaching out to every human being inhabiting the cosmos. Cosmopolitanism, then, seems a more abstract solidarity, one that asks us to empathize with and stand by Others with whom we have (or seem to have) very little in common. This is why it is imperative, Ross Posnock argues in “The Dream of Deracination: The Uses of Cosmopolitanism” (2002), that we recognize that our Others are not nearly as other as they at times seem. “By making recognition of one's common humanity, rather than recognition of difference, the goal of a just social order,” Posnock suggests, “a post-identity cosmopolitanism is an ideal that extends freedom within modernity, especially to those who have been branded as scapegoats, as exotics, as modernity's Other.”

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8 I am grateful to Brent Hayes Edwards for clarifying his understanding of diaspora in a private Email-conversation on October 2, 2006.
And, we can add, with Walter Mignolo, that in order to accomplish this, modernity must first start listening to those Others.

In his later work, Wright was interested in exactly such a project: extending freedom within modernity to modernity’s Others by engaging with them. His own marginalized position within American society had led him early on to think through and speak loudly about questions of race and nation. And with his departure from the U.S., he continued to expand the scope of his thinking, looking for political allies in his struggle against racism and imperialist oppression outside of America’s borders. In order to conduct this struggle, it seems, he determined it necessary to be radically free, free to choose his own way to live as well as his allies and comrades. His bold declarations of Cynic cosmopolitan detachment, accompanied by his official abandonment of both the United States and the Communist Party, suggest a desire to transcend the constraints imposed on him by (American) history. If he described himself in White Man Listen! as a “rootless man,” he renounced his belonging even more radically in Pagan Spain (1957):

I have no religion in the formal sense of the word. . . . I have no race except that which is forced upon me. I have no country except that to which I’m obliged to belong. I have no traditions. I’m free. I have only the future. (21)

Wright’s perspective in such statements parallels that of Cross Damon, the black anti-hero in his novel The Outsider (1953), who, after a freak accident in the Chicago subway, takes on the identity of one of the fatalities and decides to leave everything that previously determined his life behind: religion, social responsibilities, and, almost absurdly, even race. Quite unlike Wright, however, Damon, whose nihilistic world-
view attributes godlike power to his own person, ends up killing four people and causing the suicide of the women he—against his will and determination—loves. After being mortally wounded, Damon must realize that he has been able to transcend neither his race nor his human condition.

It seems almost bizarre that Wright would reward Damon’s perspective with such a terrible epiphany, only to proclaim four years later his own radical independence from all markers of belonging: religion, nationality, traditions, and even, as in Damon’s case, race. This bizarreness, however, is almost symptomatic of Wright’s central dilemma; we can find it not only in *The Outsider* and his later non-fiction books, but also in the much earlier *Native Son* (1940), with its well-known stylistic break between the naturalistic framework of the first two books and the existentialist tone of the third.9 Wright seems to be torn between a view that sees socio-historical context as determinative and the individual without power and agency, and an existentialist view that gives the individual full agency and freedom, as well as the associated responsibility. As we have seen in Paul Smith’s *Discerning the Subject*, however, the truth more likely lies between these two extremes. In Smith’s view, agency arises in those moments when, for a number of reasons, the individual-subject experiences herself through the demands of conflicting ideologies, which at least partially cancel each other out and thus open up a space of personal freedom. In such moments, he or she is forced to decide, wrenched by such moments of ideological conflict out of the security of an identity that is given, and forced to create for herself in the moment.

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of choice an identity that cannot help but be experienced as contingent, and also perhaps a little frightening at first. Wright seems to have similarly sensed that both determination and fearful freedom must be involved in a person’s intellectual development. This is perhaps why whenever he decides to go with one of those two philosophies in his books, the other is guaranteed to intrude sooner or later, complicating things sometimes to an almost unbearable degree.

Why would Wright, then, place himself at one extreme—that of total freedom from attachment—despite his awareness of the difficulty, if not impossibility, of such a project? Perhaps because he believed that his double vision as an outsider-insider made him a man “ahead of his time,” with a vision superior to that of the rest of the West? Looking at his statement in *Pagan Spain*, one could conclude that, like Cross Damon, Wright thought that he could or even had to use this “privileged” vision to free himself from all socio-historical as well as biological determinations. It seems that after a lifetime of discrimination, he wanted simply to break free from all constraints and attachments, like Diogenes the Cynic long before him. Like Cross Damon, however, he remained forever shaped and inhibited by them—and this, too, he seems to have recognized.

No work of Wright’s better exhibits this contradiction than *Black Power*. Wright’s travelogue about his trip to the British Gold Coast impressively exposes not only his failure to deliver a politically correct narrative about Africa, but also—less frequently observed—his inability to live up to his own claim to be a rootless man, at home in the world. Subtitled “a record of reactions in a land of pathos,” *Black Power*
is a record of Wright’s own awkward relationship to the challenge of his “African heritage.” Confronted with “fantastic scenes” (42) filled with “half-nude black people,” “monstrously swollen legs,” “monstrously unbiblical hernias” and other monstrosities (43), Wright constantly interrogates himself, trying to find out how and if he can or must relate to them. And, more often than not, he shudders with Western distaste and delicacy. He cannot come to terms with the sight of publicly exposed black breasts, refers again and again to those “long, fleshy, tubelike teat[s],” “some reaching twelve or eighteen inches . . . hanging loosely and flapping,” which African women “do not bother” to give their babies in front of men (42). Nor can he, the atheist, accept tribal ritual or superstition. He perceives these as examples of a pre-modern irrationality that makes the Gold Coast “pathetic,” inferior to the Western rationality he is familiar with. And life in Accra itself turns out to be too much for him, overwhelming and nauseating:

The kaleidoscope of sea, jungle, nudity, mud huts, and crowded market places induced in me a conflict deeper than I was aware of; a protest against what I saw seized me. I waited irrationally for these fantastic scenes to fade; I had the foolish feeling that I had but to turn my head and I’d see the ordered, clothed streets of Paris. (BP 42)

Such passages have attracted the ire of Anthony Appiah and others. The introductory scene of *Black Power*, in which Wright ponders his possibly “strange and disturbing” racial relations to Africa, “evokes nothing so much as Conradian dread,” according to Appiah, who notes that this dread is "intensified, no doubt, by the thought that Wright, the Afro-American, already has the horror stirring ‘in the depths’ of him, even in the tranquility of Paris” (1986, 178). While Appiah does not make it more explicit, this
seems an obvious reference to Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1900). And, conceived superficially, Wright’s travelogue does invite the sort of criticism that Chinua Achebe heaped on Conrad’s famous novella in his 1975 lecture, “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness.*” Appiah executes almost exactly the same movement as Achebe, while emphasizing as most unforgivable of all the fact that Wright, unlike Conrad, is black himself.

The parallels between Wright’s and Conrad’s texts are indeed striking. Both books present first-person narrators who depart from England for West Africa, on rather uncertain (if very different) missions. Both are at least partly autobiographical; Conrad fictionalized his experiences in the Belgian Congo into a novella, and Wright admitted to using fictional techniques to spice up his travelogue about his trip to the Gold Coast/Ghana. In both cases, also, we have an at least to some degree unreliable narrator, if for very different reasons. Conrad filters his story of Marlowe and Kurtz through two layers of narration, one unnamed and one—Marlowe himself—obviously unreliable, making it clear to the reader that much of what he learns is only hear-say, and that the original source of the tale can not be trusted in the first place. In Wright’s case, the situation is different. The narrator of his “record of reactions” is clearly Wright himself. However, as James T. Campbell makes clear in *Middle Passages* (2006), “as an imaginative artist, steeped in Conrad, [Wright] inherited an image of Africa as a dark mysterious place” (296). Furthermore, Campbell argues, “when reading his travel diary, one is chiefly struck by Wright’s own psychological instability. He had always been volatile, but never were his mood swings more
extreme and seemingly erratic than during his time in Africa, where the combination of heat and unfamiliarity appears to have produced a kind of emotional meltdown” (300, my emphasis). Given the fact that “most of Black Power was assembled by cutting and pasting from his travel diary” (Campbell 309), we must expect to be confronted with a somewhat unreliable narrator in this book, too—although the unreliability in Black Power, and this seems important, is much less controlled and deliberate than in Conrad’s novel.10 Conrad very deliberately—and consistently—employs two layers of narration in order to make the reader’s access to the ‘truth’ of the narrative that much more vague and unsure. Wright’s style in this regard, as Campbell clarifies, is much more of unintended consequence of his own profound confusion. What he experiences in Ghana “induces” in him, as he puts it in the passage I quoted earlier, “a conflict deeper than I was aware” (BP 42). Wright feels simply “seized” by the emotions that the scenes of daily life in Africa produce in him, and these strong feelings influence, as part of his cognition, his thinking. His sometimes messy and self-contradictory writing seem to be the result of these internal processes. What, though—what exactly—induces these deep emotional conflicts in Wright? An answer to this question begins to emerge when we catalogue the similarities between Conrad’s and Wright’s pieces.

10 This important difference notwithstanding, several scholars, among them Ngwarsungu Chiwengo and S. Shankar, have recently explored the interesting similarities between the two works. Ngwarsungu Chiwengo “Gazing Through the Screen: Richard Wright’s Africa” and S. Shankar. “Richard Wright’s Black Power: Colonial Politics and the Travel Narrative” both in Richard Wright’s Travel Writings: New Reflections. Virginia Whatley Smith (editor). Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001, p. 3-19.; Michel Fabre has also written on the relationship between the two books in this much earlier The World of Richard Wright (1985). In his bibliographical essay “Wright’s First Hundred Books” in The World of Richard Wright, Fabre mentions that Wright was quite familiar with Conrad’s books and owned most of them (20).
Both *Heart of Darkness* and *Black Power* offer similarly vivid descriptions of a West African climate that seems to be almost unbearably brutal—and sickening—for a Westerner. While this similarity may seem very natural, we have to keep in mind that we are comparing the text of an originally Polish white man in the service of the British Empire with the account of an African American who is visiting the country for political reasons, as well as to find out the significance of his own African heritage. This certainly puts Wright in a very different position from either Conrad or Conrad’s Marlowe; all the more, then, it is amazing how similar their perceptions and judgments about “the Africans” are, especially when we further take into consideration that Conrad writes about a people under well-entrenched colonial rule, while Wright is depicting a nation at the height of its liberation struggle. A good example for the striking similarities between the two texts can be found in the following two descriptions of Africans. Conrad’s description appears early on in the novel, introducing the reader to the horrible working conditions of African slaves:

A slight clinking behind me made me turn my head. Six black men advanced in a file, toiling up the path. They walked erect and slow, balancing small baskets full of earth on their heads, and the clink kept time with their footsteps. Black rags were round their loins, and the short ends behind waggled to and fro like tails. I could see every rib, the joints of their limbs were like knots in a rope; each had an iron collar on his neck. . . . these men could by no stretch of imagination be called enemies. They were called enemies, and the outraged law, like the bursting shells, had come to them, an insoluble mystery for the sea. All their meager breasts panted together, the violently dilated nostrils quivered, the eyes stared stonily uphill. They passed me within six inches, without a glance, with that complete, deathlike indifference of unhappy savages (12).
Here we see both sides of Conrad’s ambiguous position: his criticism of the brutal colonial rule of Leopold II, and the racism that makes it impossible—in spite of all his compassion—for him to see the Congolese as full-fledged human beings. As Chinua Achebe demonstrated, Conrad’s depiction of the African people is highly reductive, dehumanizing, and exoticizing. Indeed, the Eurocentric/Western contempt and arrogance expressed in this and other passages led to Conrad’s condemnation as a racist in the 1970s. A passage in *Black Power*, however, in which Wright observes a group of African seamen at work, reveals much the same attitude:

> Coming toward me was an army of men, naked save for ragged strips of cloth about their hips, dripping wet, their black skins glistening in the pitiless sun, their heads holding pieces of freight. . . . Beyond these rushing and panting men, far out on the open sea, were scores of men who paddled like furies against the turbulent surf. . . . The wet and glistening black robots would beach their canoes. . . . and, without pausing, heave out the freight and hoist it upon their heads; then at breakneck speed, rush out of the sea. . . . and run. . . . They ran in single file, one behind the other, barely glancing at me as they pushed forward, their naked feet leaving prints in the soft sand which the next sea wave would wash away. . . . What I saw was so useless, so futile, so inhuman that I didn’t believe it; it didn’t seem real. I felt no protest; I was simply stunned, feeling that someone had snatched back a curtain and I was contemplating half-human men. . . . I saw no whips or guns; a weird peace gripped the scene (BP 133-34)

Comparing the two passages, we see more similarities than differences, despite the clear shift in focus. In both passages, the Africans are exoticized and dehumanized: by Conrad’s allusion to (the tails of) animals, and, in a more mid-20th century idiom, by Wright’s description of the men as robot-like and inhuman. In both passages “the Africans” are perceived as submissive and indifferent; they go about their difficult labor without resistance and pay no or almost no attention to the observer. Interestingly,
both narrators, in beholding the respective scenes, express less their protest than a certain shuddering compassion mixed with disapproval for the men they are observing. They both seem to understand themselves as ‘outsiders’ to these African scenes, regardless of the fact that one of the narrators is African American and has come to Africa to find out “how much of me was African” (BP 6), while the other is very much part of the colonial machinery.

In his article on Heart of Darkness Achebe complains frequently about Conrad’s extensive use of blackness and of pars pro toto in his depictions of Africans, offering only speechless, fragmented black limbs and “gleaming white eyes” in some wild, uncontrolled frenzy. Wright, in turn, as Appiah and other critics have pointed out, does not hesitate to offer us accounts like that of “a swirling knot of men and women; they were dancing in a wide circle barefooted, shuffling to the demonical beat of drums” (BP 139). And when he leaves the dancing crowd, puzzled and estranged, he states, “I had understood nothing. I was black and they were black, but my blackness didn’t help me” (BP 140). Wright’s own blackness does not help him in understanding these other blacks, because his historical situatedness is radically different from theirs. Regardless of their shared skin color, these people are profoundly ‘other’ for him. If Achebe complains that “Heart of Darkness projects the image of Africa as ‘the other world,’ the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization” (252, my emphasis), one could certainly argue that Wright is guilty of the same tendencies, as S. Shankar does when he writes that “by rendering the Gold Coast ‘pathetic,’ [Wright] assimilates the country and its inhabitants to a powerful Western dis-
course of alterity” (18). Good examples for this Western ‘othering’ of Africans include Wright’s repeated expressions of indignation over bare breasts and public urination.

Wright quite clearly sees himself as a Western stranger on the Gold Coast, a cultural outsider who is different as well as distant. Throughout the text, he defines himself as American by nationality, and as Western by culture. Regardless of skin color or racial heritage, he is a Western intellectual raised and (self-)educated in the cultural realm generated by Christianity and Enlightenment, and therefore an outsider to African culture. That he is an outsider to Western society as well—a second-class citizen at best—gives him a particular perspective on this cultural heritage, but does not alter the fact that his value system is thoroughly Western. As James T. Campbell puts it in Middle Passages, “even ‘open-minded’ travelers . . . view the world through specific cultural and historical lenses. . . . The fact that some travelers possess black skin does not necessarily inoculate them against this influence, though it often complicates their reactions” (384). This is how we can explain the astonishing parallels between Black Power and Heart of Darkness. The cultural commonalities between the two authors are far more substantial than their national, temporal and racial differences. In this, we see a Richard Wright who not only falls short in the eyes of critics like Appiah—and the many others for whom he had surrendered “racial authenticity”—but, more importantly in our context, also fails utterly to follow through on his proclaimed severing of all attachments. Firmly tied to the Eurocentric worldview of the West, to the image of himself as a Westerner, he is not, after all, the rootless Cynic cosmopolitan he repeatedly declares himself to be.
We may learn two things from Richard Wright’s failure here, both of critical importance for the following section. The first lesson is that the position of a Cynic, rootless and detached cosmopolitan is not only ethically problematic, but also highly impracticable. We cannot by sheer willpower disconnect ourselves, our acting, our thinking, our feeling, from our historical situatedness—the historically conditioned character of the understanding itself that makes that decision to disconnect. The free-floating intellectual Karl Mannheim, and to some degree also Ulf Hannerz, advocate as the ideal cosmopolitan is, as I have mentioned earlier, a conceptually problematic individual. The radical intellectual and cultural independence implied in such a notion presupposes an autonomy of identity that we do not seem to have.

The second lesson we may learn from Wright’s apparent failure, however, is that his audacious declarations of rootlessness in *Pagan Spain*, and, partly, in *White Man Listen*, while effectually radical for shocking the (American) public, do not comprise the limits of his actually existing cosmopolitanism. We learn to understand such professions of detachment as part of his cosmopolitan process. While he was painfully aware of the complex entanglements that tied him to his historical situatedness, Wright was committed, in these texts and elsewhere, to the difficult endeavor of transcending these constraints, and used the most radical rhetoric possible to underline this commitment to free agency. Wright’s statements declare his intellectual independence as well as his intention to pledge his primary allegiance to no government, religion, or racial community. That he did, however, pledge his allegiance to a much greater community,
emerges already when we reexamine the philosophical shift that occurs at the end of *The Outsider*.

In Cross Damon, Wright creates a hero who desperately tries to transcend his particular historical situation and racial boundaries in an existential search for identity. Regarding race as a social construct rather than a pre-given essence, Damon not only violently confronts the normative power of a racialized American society, but also believes that he can exist as an outsider to society in general. By making Damon’s struggle for *absolute autonomy* a failure, however, Wright seems to argue that such autonomy is both inhuman and impossible. While, as is often observed, Kierkegaardian dread characterizes the larger part of the novel, it is a decidedly *humanistic* version of existentialism that the novel acknowledges in the end, comparable to (and perhaps directly influenced by) Jean-Paul Sartre’s position as we find it in his essay *Existentialism and Humanism* (1945). On the last pages of *The Outsider*, Wright has Cross Damon openly renounce his nihilism, realizing that he needs the recognition of as well as solidarity with others to constitute a meaningful identity:

> I wish I had something to give the meaning of my life to others. . . . To make a bridge from man to man. . . . Men hate themselves and it makes them hate others. . . . Man is all we’ve got. . . . [.] I wanted to be free [but] the search can’t be done alone. . . . Alone a man is nothing. . . . Man is a promise that he must never break. . . . (TO 585)

A comparison to Sartre’s *Existentialism and Humanism* reveals the parallels between Damon’s final epiphany and Sartre’s plea for a humanist existentialism:

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11 For one particularly cogent example, see Claudia Tate’s “Christian Existentialism in *The Outsider,*” in *College Language Association Journal* 25 (June 1982): 371-395.
The man who becomes aware of himself through the cogito also perceives all others. . . . The other is indispensable to my own existence, as well as to my knowledge about myself. . . . We want freedom for freedom’s sake and in every particular circumstance. But in wanting freedom we discover that it depends entirely on the freedom of others, and that the freedom of others depends on ours. (52)

The responsibility of intersubjectivity is what, according to Sartre, constitutes the humanism of existentialism. While each individual is free and therefore fully responsible for his or her actions, he or she is at the same time also dependent on the recognition of others and responsible for the consequences that chosen actions have for others.

This is exactly the realization that Damon makes at the end of his life: other humans matter and the building of a meaningful life cannot be accomplished alone. It is a realization that refers not to a specific nation or race, but to mankind in general. While The Outsider is on the one hand a novel about a very specific historical situation, that of the African American male in the United States in the mid-20th century, Wright made clear that the hero in this story “could be of any race,” and, presumably, of any nationality.12 What he was depicting, Wright felt, was the problem of human existence as such. Thus, while The Outsider is in both theme and expression undoubtedly an African American novel, it is at the same time also, as Paul Gilroy has argued, “an elaborate body of philosophically informed reflection on the character of western civilization and the place of racism within it” (Black Atlantic, 154). Wright is, indeed, concerned with a problem, and with solidarity that transcends race as well as nation.

Like Damon, Wright himself yearned for ties based on individual insight and agency, bonds that would be open to individuals of every ethnicity or nationality. In

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12 Wright quoted in Michel Fabre, The World of Richard Wright, 172.
Black Power, Wright repeats a speech that he gave during one of Nkrumah’s political rallies, in which he claimed that the specific “heritage” of African Americans “has brought us a sense of unity deeper than race, a sense of humanity that has made us sensitive to the sufferings of all mankind, that has made us increasingly human in a world that is rapidly losing its claim to humanity” (BP 84, my emphasis). This question of “sensitivity,” and its importance for the development of a cosmopolitan understanding of the world, is, as we will see, of central importance in the work of another African American writer, William Gardner Smith, as I will discuss in detail in the next chapter. And while Wright gives much less thought than Smith to the exact value of sensitivity in the recognition of a common humanity, his professed yearning for solidarity with and compassion for all human beings is nevertheless at odds with his proclaimed detachment from human bonds, the Cynic position. Rather, springing from a specific heritage's embrace of the universal, it fits precisely the definition introduced earlier for Stoic cosmopolitanism.

It should not come as a surprise, then, when Michel Fabre claims that Wright remained all his life “very much a humanist” (The World of Richard Wright, 159). Like Sartre, Wright believed in the importance of political commitment, which was expressed in their joint engagement in the Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire (RDF), a radical left group that rejected both American capitalism and Soviet communism, and that was committed to finding a third (transnational) political way. Like Sartre in turn made Richard Wright one of the prime examples for a politically committed writer in his What is Literature? (1948).
which led, amongst other things, to his involvement in the RDF: “how to inject a personal philosophy into Marxist theory; how to restore morality to political action; and how to save mankind from . . . destruction through the reactivation of humanistic values” (159). Indeed, all his non-fiction books of the 1950s turn away from race relations in the United States, and show concern instead about the future of the world in general and the situation of the decolonization movements in particular. While his horizon widens to include now a transnational and transracial group of people whose members live all over the world, his sense of loyalty remains partial—it is with those who are the victims of oppression.

Stoic cosmopolitanism allows for such particular concerns, for “special loyalties to more specific communities” within the framework of world citizenship (Nussbaum 7), while also advocating universal allegiance to humanity as a whole. Wright, despite his repeated declarations to the contrary, clearly always had such “special loyalties.” The concrete object of his loyalty, however, shifted over time. While his earlier loyalty was to the African American community within the United States, the primary allegiance of his later years was to the global community of the oppressed. This shift was as much predicated on his specific historical situatedness as an African American as it was a result of his frequent and diverse encounters with the cultural “Other.” In neither case, however, did these primary allegiances efface a deeper identification with an abstract idea of America, an idea that was inextricably tied to Enlightenment principles.
If one’s historical situatedness is just an accident of birth, as Martha Nussbaum claims (7), it is certainly a decisive one, and Wright dedicated much of his literary career to a minute examination of the injuries that result from the specific historical accident of being born black in 20th-century America. “The Negro American,” he writes in *White Man Listen!,* “is the only American in America who says ‘I want to be an American.’ More or less all the other Americans are born Americans and take their Americanism for granted” (17). As a result of this paradoxical existence, Wright claims, the African American cannot help but become “a kind of negative American” (17). To be American in the United States, he said in a 1947 interview, “means to be white, protestant, and very rich. This excludes almost entirely black people and anyone else who can be easily identified.” Wright understood, however, that despite such exclusion, and despite his own remarks to the contrary, he never would—indeed, never could—entirely stop being American.

**Americanism versus Cosmopolitanism?**

The question of Wright’s “Americanness” is perhaps best addressed in an unpublished piece that he presumably wrote for a French audience. There, as reproduced in Michel Fabre’s 1985 *The World of Richard Wright,* Wright offers not one but 86 answers to the question, “Am I an American?” Every single answer starts with, “I am an American but…” (in *The World of Richard Wright* 188), and Fabre suggests that the “but” is the most important point of these answers. However, given his specu-

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lation that the text was written in the late ‘50s—which would mean either after or concurrently with both *Pagan Spain* and *White Man Listen!,* it is quite remarkable that Wright identified himself as an American at all, much less 86 times in a row. The American he presented himself as being, of course, was an American with a twist:

I am an American but tomorrow I could surrender my citizenship and still be an American.

I am an American but not of today’s America.

I am an American but I can live without America and still be an American, which ought to—I feel—prove what an American is or ought to be.\(^\text{15}\)

It would not be going too far, it seems, to say that Wright, when writing this, still felt attached to America, but much more to an America of ideas than to an actually existing place. The idea or ideal that connected him emotionally to America was one he had grown up with and could not help but embrace, but it was also an idea that conflicted so brutally with his experiences of America that he had to leave the country in order to keep it alive. Only in a non-American framework could he experience freedom, equality, justice, and all the other values that were so inextricably linked for him to the concept of America. To be American, for Wright, was thus not to pledge allegiance to the American flag or to own an American passport (although he would learn painfully the significance of the latter); to be American meant, and this may come as a surprise, to be thoroughly cosmopolitan. “I am *that* sort of American,” he writes, “an amalgam of many races and many continents and cultures, [and] I feel that the real end

\(^{15}\text{Quoted in Fabre, *The World of Richard Wright* (1985), 188-189.}\)
and aim of being an American is to be able to live as a man anywhere,” respecting “the sacredness that I feel resides in human personality.”\textsuperscript{16} This should not be confused with the oft-heard argument that America’s melting-pot policy equals a micro-cosmopolitanism.\textsuperscript{17} Wright does not claim that American society is even remotely cosmopolitan, nor does he imply that America is in any position to “educate,” “police,” or otherwise colonize other countries. He is an American, he declares, but unlike many of his countrymen, he need “not use the ideals of my country as an excuse to ask you to give me access to the minerals or the strategic positions of your country.”\textsuperscript{18}

Although acutely aware of American realities, Wright does not, perhaps cannot, disconnect his cosmopolitan ideals from their perceived Americanness, not even in the late 1950s, after a decade of expatriation. “American” ideals, most of which he can only experience in a non-American framework, do not, for all that, stop being American for him. This is the tricky nature of historical situatedness: it cannot be fully renounced or left behind, because it shapes the way we see and think, and even the way we imagine a different way of seeing or thinking. This is why, as James T. Campbell has noted, “[i]nnumerable African American travelers in Africa have experienced . . . moments of disillusionment, moments bringing them face-to-face with Africa’s unfamiliarity and their own painful Americanness” (211). We can travel all over the world, but can never quite be rid of our emotional and intellectual baggage. It is possible, however, first, to become conscious of this situation, and, second, to seek the

\textsuperscript{16} ibid. 189, my emphasis.
\textsuperscript{17} This argument can be found, for example, in Benjamin Barber’s “Constitutional Faith,” and Michael McConnell’s “Don’t Neglect the Little Platoons,” both in \textit{For Love of Country} (1996), ed. Martha Nussbaum.
\textsuperscript{18} Fabre, 1985, p. 190.
help of an Other to gradually transcend it through an exchange of conflicting viewpoints and ideologies. This Other-assisted transcendence is what Richard Wright tried to achieve during the final years of his life, and is also one of the central concerns of Hans-Georg Gadamer, in his 1960 *Wahrheit und Methode* (*Truth and Method*).

**Wrighting Intercultural Hermeneutics from the Perspective of Coloniality**

Gadamer’s rehabilitation of the prejudice in *Truth and Method* springs from a recognition of the inevitable historical situatedness of every human being, and of the necessity of interaction between the contexts of the Self and the Other in producing human understanding. Gadamer looks closer at the etymology and half-hidden second meaning of ‘pre-judice’ – in German, *Vor-urteil* – which he understands as a *vor-läufiges Urteil*, a pre-judgment. He argues that, rather than closing us off, our pre-judices (or ‘pre-judgments’) actually govern our ability to open up to ‘what is to be understood,’ in this case the cultural Other.\(^\text{19}\) Gadamer takes the Heideggerian notion of a prior hermeneutical situatedness and frames it in terms of the ‘fore-structures' of understanding. A prejudice (pre-judgment) is an anticipatory structure that allows the Other to be grasped in a preliminary fashion. Not only are pre-judgments derived from our own cultural-historical situatedness unavoidable, but they are absolutely essential, as an anticipatory structure, to our process of understanding. Understanding, according to Gadamer, always involves an ‘anticipation of completeness’: a continuously re-

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\(^{19}\) Gadamer’s concern for conversation with cultural Others came out of his preceding hermeneutical focus on conversation with historical texts, which might be one explanation for his near-total reliance on rationality in the process of understanding others as well as oneself. Emotionality in thought, as it has been considered by Martha Nussbaum and a number of others, and as I am using the concept here, does not play a significant role in Gadamer’s process of understanding.
visable presupposition regarding what is to be understood. If prejudices are as vital to understanding as they are inevitable, the capacity to never get stuck with a prejudice, but instead to treat each one as a ‘continuously revisable’ pre-judgment, is wholly dependent on what Gadamer calls ‘openness,’ or ‘goodwill.’ “Openness to the Other,” he writes, “involves recognizing that I myself must accept some things that are against me, even though no one else forces me to” (WM 361). Without goodwill, there is no readiness to open up and revise previous pre-judgments into new pre-judgments. This, however, is how we function as understanding beings—by having our own assumptions (which are, in a different register, fed and mediated by ideological content and frames) constantly challenged by other, new and differing information, without ever arriving at a fixed or final judgment.

Gadamer’s reliance on goodwill for successful mediation and understanding is mirrored in an important passage in White Man Listen!: “[I]f good will is lacking,” Wright asserts, “everything is lost and a dialogue between men becomes not only useless, but dangerous, and sometimes even incriminating” (47). Wright not only shares with Gadamer this insistence on the importance of goodwill, but also joins this latter in his conviction of the utter impossibility of an objective, eternally true standpoint:

Obviously no striving for an objectivity of attitude is ever complete. Tomorrow, or the day after, someone will discover some fact, some element, or a nuance that I’ve forgotten to take into account, and, accordingly, my attitude will have to be revised, discarded, or extended, as the case may be. (WML 48)

Our attitudes, or our preliminary judgments, to speak in Gadamer’s terminology, must be constantly revised, Wright claims, because as human beings we are inevitably
the slaves of our assumptions, of time and circumstance; we are the victims of our passions and illusions; and the most that our critics can ask of us is this: Have you taken your passions, your illusions, your time, and your circumstances into account? That is what I am attempting to do. More than that no reasonable man of good will can demand. (WML 48)

Wright and Gadamer thus share a fundamental trust in the power of open-minded interaction to help individuals take their own circumstances into account. And, as I have discussed in chapter 1, Gadamer goes even further. Trying to understand the Other, he claims, is not only important for intercultural or interpersonal understanding. It is crucial for our self-understanding as well. Real self-understanding, according to Gadamer, even requires the “strengthening of the Other against me.”

If taken seriously, such a definition of understanding has rather serious implications for the cosmopolitan endeavor. Gadamer makes an excellent case for not only accepting, or tolerating the Other, but for giving the benefit of the doubt, assuming from the start of a conversation that indeed the Other might quite probably be right. Without the challenge of an Other, he claims, we can not see as constructed what we have learned to see as natural. Only the Other can save us from being stuck forever in the narrow little box that we believe to be the world. For his part, in one of Black Power’s most revealing passages, Wright shows how such a process works:

And suddenly I was self-conscious; I began to question myself, my assumptions, I was assuming that these people had to be pulled out of this life, out of these conditions of poverty, had to become literate and eventually industrialized. But why? Was not the desire for that mostly on my part rather than theirs? I was literate, Western, disinheritied, and industrialized and I felt each day the pain and anxiety of it. Why then must I advocate the dragging of these people into my trap? (BP 163)
Wright’s moment of doubt reveals the important flipside of an honest and goodwill-driven engagement with new contexts, new ideologies, and new cultural realms: the interrogation and renegotiation of where one comes from.

This is why Malian writer Manthia Diawara calls *Black Power* a “magnificent book”. Despite all the problems that the travelogue exhibits, Diawara is deeply impressed by Wright’s vulnerable self-exposure of his conflicting emotions of “identification and estrangement, love and hate” toward the Africans as well as toward his own background (72). It is through such constant interrogation of currently held prejudices, through (often painful) self-awareness, that the cosmopolitan has the chance to not only better understand the cultural Other, but is also less and less determined by the society that formed her. As Indian philosopher Ram Adhar Mall claims, the hermeneutical subject can, through the acquisition of an intercultural stance, become to some degree ‘situatedly unsituated’ (*orthaft ortlos*), being historically situated and partly transcending that situatedness at the same time (20). Such a position—of being ‘situatedly unsituated’—seems to correspond roughly to the placement of the cosmopolitan in-process: while she cannot escape from her specific historical situatedness, the cosmopolitan is engaged in a lifelong endeavor to transcend that situation intellectually. She does this not only by subscribing to an ideal of global human equality and social justice, and by assuming that there are always enough overlaps between her and other humans to enable understanding and relation, but also by actively engaging with the Other for a better understanding of the *exact* historical situatedness of that Other, as well as her own. Without this understanding of both historical situations, the Other’s
and one’s own, without an understanding of the underlying economic interrelations of those situations, calls such as Martha Nussbaum’s for making “all human beings part of our community of dialogue and concern” (9) must remain pretty but empty. This is why Walter Mignolo and other contemporary theorists have emphasized the central importance of the voice of the Other for a cosmopolitanism that would go beyond Western benevolence within the framework of coloniality.

Wright’s and Gadamer’s shared emphasis on the importance of good-willed conversation and critical self-examination do indeed resonate surprisingly well with Mignolo’s demands for a critical and dialogical cosmopolitanism. “Critical and dialogic cosmopolitanism as a regulative principle,” Mignolo writes, “demands yielding generously (‘convivially’ said Vitoria; ‘friendly’ said Kant) to diversity as a universal and cosmopolitan project in which everyone participates instead of ‘being participated’” (Mignolo 747). To the happy list of “generously,” “convivially,” and “friendly,” one could easily add Gadamer’s and Wright’s “good-willed.” All of these statements, from Wright to Mignolo, sound in turn remarkably like that of the Stoic Marcus Aurelius, who wrote in his Meditations: “Accustom yourself not to be inattentive to what another person says, and as far as possible enter into that person’s mind. . . .Generally, one must first learn many things before one can judge another’s action with understanding.”

What should make Wright more interesting for Mignolo’s project than Marcus Aurelius or Hans-Georg Gadamer is that, as a Marxist, he is highly conscious of privilege and exploitation, and, as an African American in the mid-20th century, he is writing from a perspective of coloniality. That latter is the only viewpoint, Mignolo

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20 Quoted in Martha Nussbaum, For Love of Country, p. 10.
has claimed, that can develop a cosmopolitanism that will not get caught—willingly or unwillingly—in the trap of perpetual Eurocentricity.

Wright himself would certainly have agreed. After all, he considered himself ‘ahead of the West,’ as a result of the fact that, while being a Westerner himself, his stance “conflicts at several vital points with the present, dominant outlook of the West’ (WML 55). And he was not alone. As we see in both White Man Listen! and The Color Curtain (1956), Wright’s highly personal report from the Bandung Conference in Indonesia, Wright expected a reformulation and reorganization of modernity by those who had been victimized by it. It is an image of the victims of Mignolo’s coloniality that Wright ponders when looking at the participants of the Conference:

The despised, the insulted, the hurt, the dispossessed—in short, the underdogs of the human race were meeting. Here were class and racial and religious consciousness on a global scale. […] And what had these nations in common? Nothing, it seemed to me, but what their past relationship to the Western world had made them feel. This meeting of the rejected was in itself a kind of judgment upon the Western world! (CC 72)

But the situation of this ‘meeting of the rejected’ in fact was, and Wright was aware of that too, a little more complicated. The people meeting in Bandung were the very elite of the Third World countries, most of whom had been educated in the West. The consequences that Wright saw implied in the complicated historical situatedness of this elite are summed up well in his description of a young “Singapore-born” woman, “thoroughly Westernized in manner and speech.” Her dilemma, Wright writes, “did reveal the irony of educating colonials in Western schools: her education had conditioned her for a situation other than the one in which she lived. Her impulsiveness of
speech might have been the product of the clash of the two worlds of values that swirled in her.” Her problem, Wright continues “was a question of identification,” of “emotional rootlessness” (CC 43). This young Singaporean does not fit in the West, because she is a colonial subject; however, she does not fit in the society she was born into either, because, like many of the other young Asians and Africans that Wright interviews in his book, she “was neither Eastern nor Western […] a stranger to both worlds” (79). Wright calls this new generation the ‘tragic elite.’ Like him they are bound to feel lonely and ‘different’ for the rest of their lives, being insiders as well as outsiders in both the West and the non-Western countries. Like him, they have become homeless, and can at the same time, to some degree, “make [themselves] at home almost anywhere on this earth” (WML, xxix). Like him, they have taken to a “secular and rational base of thought and feeling,” and like him, (even if he would not admit that part) they have become “more Western than the West” (CC 219). This is why, like him, he expects them to play a crucial role in the decolonization movement as well as in the creation of a new world order.

In *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy notes that, within the African American tradition, Wright was one of those thinkers “who were prepared to renounce the easy

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21 What Wright describes seems to anticipate a phenomenon that recently has become known as TCKs —Third Culture Kids. I am using this term in chapter 5 to explain the hybrid cultural identity of Pearl S. Buck, who, like Wright’s ‘tragic elite’ was exposed to more than one culture during the formative years of her childhood. Third Culture Kids, according to David Pollock and Ruth Van Reken in their recent book on the topic, are people who have, for a number of reasons, grown up in more than one culture, assuming traits of both or all of them, developing thereby a ‘third culture’ that is not identical with any of the contact-cultures, and can be only fully shared with other TCKs with similar backgrounds. Apart from cultural hybridity, Pollock and Van Reken also detect other side effects of developing a third culture, such as cultural tolerance and a tendency to loneliness and eternal outsidership. They claim that we can learn from today’s TCKs a lot about the societies of our global future, in which more and more people will grow up in more than one culture.
claims of African American exceptionalism in favor of a global, coalitional politics in which anti-imperialism and anti-racism might be seen to interact if not to fuse” (225). Wright’s rejection in Black Power of a ‘racial explanation’ for his being in Africa does, then, perhaps not necessarily have to lead, as Appiah has insisted, to a “paranoid hermeneutics” (1986, 181). We could argue instead with S. Shankar that, rather than growing paranoid in the course of efforts to “reconcile a common racial history” and a “historical gulf” between Africans and African Americans, Wright “introduces a third position into the discussion.” Instead of wholly identifying with either “(black) race” or “(Western) culture, Wright chooses to make his stand on the ground of [transnational and transracial] politics” (Shankar 15). This move, Shankar suggests, is made possible only because of Wright’s anti-essentialist stance on race, and, I want to add, because he had become aware of the problems implicit in racial identity politics.

In The Black Atlantic, Gilroy argues that “the political language of identity levels out distinctions between chosen connections and given particularities: between the person you choose to be and the things that determine your individuality by being thrust upon you” (106). In Against Race, and even more so in Postcolonial Melancholia (2005), Gilroy “inquires into the components of a cosmopolitan response to the continuing dangers of race-thinking” (2000, 8). Race is, for him, ultimately a concept that has served its purpose in the 20th century and must now be left behind in the embrace of a trans-racial cosmopolitan future. “Multicultural ethics and politics,” he suggests, “could be premised upon an agonistic, planetary humanism” (2005, 4). Challenging us to develop an understanding of human relationships that goes beyond the
confines of race thinking, he argues for a “cosmopolitan solidarity” that recognizes
people from all over the world as human on the basis of their differences. Such soli-
darity, per Gilroy, embraces hybridity, diaspora, and multiculturalism without losing
its belief in human sameness; rather it constantly negotiates the everydayness of racial
and other differences. As “agonistic” and “planetary” humanism, it is “capable of
comprehending the universality of our elemental vulnerability to the wrongs we visit
upon each other” (4). Richard Wright was at least on his way to this cosmopolitan fu-
ture, Gilroy argues in his earlier Against Race: his humanist mindset as well as his
choice of territorial exile should be understood not so much as a move within a global
racialized diaspora, but rather “as the first step to his nonracial utopia” (Gilroy 2000,
343, my emphasis).

Gilroy’s statements emphasize the shift in Wright’s primary allegiance that I
have mentioned earlier. Virginia Whatley Smith describes this process as a movement
“from old to new, narrow to broad, American to Western intellectual that would cul-
minate in the self-description he would later append as a ‘Western Man of Color’ in
White Man Listen!” (190). If the primary concern of Wright’s later works was with
those who have been the victims of coloniality, to use Mignolo’s term, his first allegi-
ance was with those who thought like him, those with whom he could form ties built
on insight. Rather than seeking his allies and attachments in racial or national realms,
Wright chooses political grounds for this solidarity. One of the main things that ini-
tially attracted him to the Pan-Africanist movement, Smith reminds us, was their de-
cidedly socialist world view (176). Wright’s prolonged engagement with transnational
Pan-Africanism has been thoroughly discussed elsewhere, but it is important to note for our context that transnationalism is not the same as cosmopolitanism. While transnationalism denotes primarily the material fact of transcending national borders, cosmopolitanism has always some ethical or moral premise to it. Wright, while sharing many interests and goals with Kwame Nkrumah, George Padmore, Léopold Senghor and other Pan-Africanists, did not, ultimately, want to stop at a community of the transnational African diaspora. Instead, he hoped for a system of living that would respect “the sacredness that I feel resides in human personality” (Quoted in Fabre 189). This is why he bonded with Sartre and other French intellectuals, with whom also he shared a Marxist – and internationalist – vision. When it served the right political cause he was clearly willing to ‘cross the color line’ in his choice of allegiance. While not personally victimized in the way people of color were, these intellectuals sided with the oppressed and therefore shared a political vision with Wright, regardless of their racial and ethnic background. And such were the kind of political alliances he was looking for.

Wright had, of course, crossed the color-line for political reasons already with his membership in the CPUSA, until his break with the party in 1942. However, his turn away from Communism did not mean the abandonment of his Marxist outlook, which, in its decided internationalism, certainly prefigured and facilitated his cosmo-

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The Stalinist practice of Communism, however, did not gel with Wright’s personal beliefs and experiences as a black American, and worked still less with his cosmopolitan vision. He explained the reasons for his break with the Communist Party in his essay “I Tried to Be a Communist” (1944); however, his deep disappointment, even embitterment finds also powerful expression in *The Outsider* as well as in his very last and unpublished novel, “Island of Hallucination” (1959).

Wright wrote both books while living in Paris, but while *The Outsider* is still set in the United States and deals with the American brand of communism, “Island of Hallucination” explores the rivalries and espionage between Stalinist and Trotskyite groups among black expatriates in Paris. If *The Outsider*’s Cross Damon is an existential anti-hero and ruthless fugitive who in the end has to understand that “man cannot live alone,” the black protagonist of “Island of Hallucination” comes to an in some ways similar, but also different realization. Pressed upon by both Stalinist and Trotskyite ideologies, he finally has to recognize that these, like his deep belief in his own radical independence, are only hallucinations. Like all the other African American expatriates around him, he is in reality still firmly tied to American ideology, because, avoiding confrontation with the Other and living on the little private island of

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23 The final sentence of the *Communist Manifesto*—“Proletarier aller Länder, vereinigt Euch! (Proletarians of all countries unite)—combined with the ideal of the class-less society and the expected withering away of the state after the revolution, certainly implies a form of cosmopolitanism of its own. Although the Leninist tradition tended to use ‘cosmopolitan’ as a derogatory term, specifically attributed to the Jewish diaspora and other people considered dangerously ‘rootless,’ it continued the transnational tendency of the *Communist Manifesto* in its proclamation of proletarian internationalism, if not necessarily in its practice. Rejecting a bourgeois concept of the nation, the proletarian-internationalist approach emphasizes the common interests of the working class masses of every nation, which it considers to be the common basic interests of all mankind. Since national aggression is seen as a product of (capitalist) class exploitation, the international proletariat is encouraged to form solidarity across borders, and to be opposed to any oppression of one nation by another.
his own hallucinations, he has never stopped being interpellated by American ideology as a black, inferior subject. If he wants to live a life worth living, Wright’s last hero comes to realize, he needs to engage in serious and responsible interaction with Others of any nationality or skin color. “Island of Hallucination” therefore, despite its unfinished character, offers more than simply interesting insights into Wright’s (somewhat paranoid) view of the black expatriate community around him. It also pushes a step further the cosmopolitan thinking already present in *The Outsider*.

**Getting beyond the American Nation: Wright’s “Island of Hallucination”**

The Cold War, as Hazel Rowley reminds us in “The ‘Exile’ Years? How the 50’s Culture Wars Destroyed Richard Wright” (2006), was only beginning when Wright left the United States for good in 1947. However, the fact that he now lived in France, many sea miles away from the U.S., did not mean he, as a former member of the CPUSA, was able to escape the anti-Communist paranoia that soon was to engulf his home country. For one thing, he had not really left that country behind: neither, as we have seen, emotionally, nor even materially. As Rowley points out, Wright had, and continued to have, “an American passport, an American literary agent, an American publisher, American readers, and American friends and associates.”24 His reliance on American distribution channels made him vulnerable to American domestic poli-

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24 Hazel Rowley, “The ‘Exile’ Years?” http://www.bookforum.com/archive/dec_05/rowley.html, accessed on April 22, 2008. In his reliance on American distribution channels and audiences Wright was, as I mentioned in the preface, not alone. All of the writers discussed here first published their books almost without exception with American presses, addressing them to American readers. Such a ‘writing back’ to the ‘home country’ had serious consequences for the artistic and personal freedom and independence of all of these writers. http://www.bookforum.com/archive/dec_05/rowley.html, accessed on April 22, 2008.
tics. One need only recall the remarkable preface that Harper made him write for
*Black Power* before they would publish the book. “From 1932 to 1944 I was a mem-
ber of the Communist Party of the United States of America,” he writes there, “Today
I am no longer a member of that party or a subscriber of its aims,” because “Marxi-
st Communism, though it was changing the world, was changing that world in a manner
that granted me even less freedom than I had possessed before” (xxxvi). This was
written in 1954, over ten years after Wright’s leaving of the CPUSA, but Harper had
made it crystal-clear to him that without yet another outspoken renunciation of Com-
munism they would not be able to publish his book in the U.S.

The fact that he remained an American citizen equally continued to affect
Wright’s liberty. Like all American expatriates at the time, he had to have his passport
renewed every two years at the American Embassy. And it was made quite clear to
him and his fellow renegade compatriots that they would not get new passports if they
spoke too critically against the U.S. The daunting examples of Paul Robeson and
W.E.B. DuBois, both of whom had their passports revoked during the 1950s, made
clear that such warnings were not without teeth.\(^\text{25}\) Another significant uncertainty for
Americans in France, as Rowley reminds us, “was that the French government could

\(^{25}\) Paul Robeson learned in 1950 that he would not receive a new passport to travel from the State
Department, and that a “stop notice” had been issued at all ports, meaning his effectual confinement to
the United States. He and his lawyers were informed that “his frequent criticism of the treatment of
blacks in the United States should not be aired in foreign countries.” Martin B. Duberman, *Paul
Robeson*. New York: New Press, 1995, pp. 400. Robeson also, of course, had repeatedly expressed his
sympathies toward the Soviet Union and Stalin, although he never was a member of the Communist
Party. Only in 1956, 6 years after the initial revocation, was he allowed again to leave the United States.
W.E.B. DuBois also lost his American passport in 1950, after being acquitted as an agent of the Soviet
Union. The State Department returned his passport in 1958, only to revoke it again in 1959, when he
arrived at the U.S. border after visiting the USSR. Eventually, DuBois renounced his American
citizenship (after his passport had been denied one more time), and, shortly before his death, became a
citizen of Ghana.
deport them at any time if they in any way stirred up trouble in their adopted country. This meant that Wright could say nothing about French foreign policy in Indochina or Algeria. \(^{26}\) Looking at “Island of Hallucination,” we must assume that the threat of being kicked out of France was even more intimidating to Wright than the prospect of losing his passport. In his fictional portrayal of the African American expatriate community in Paris, he deliberately transposes a historical conflict over a letter written in favor of the Algerian liberation struggle—the so-called Gibson Affair—into a fictional one that is about the rivalry of Stalinist and Trotskyite groups in France.

Indeed, Wright seems to have tried to kill at least three birds with one stone in “Island of Hallucination.” He wanted to write a scathing critique of organized Communism, paint a grim and spiteful picture of the black American community in Paris (which he had come to despise), and assert once again that a black American could only become a full human being if he learned to live outside or at least beyond American ideology. In doing so, however, he did not want to get in trouble with the French government. That last he would have had to expect, had he written about what the Gibson Affair was really about—French colonial policy in Algeria and its treatment of Algerian immigrants in France—or about similar such issues. Richard Gibson—the African American writer and journalist from whom the ‘Affair’ took its name—argues that it is for this reason that Wright “carefully sets the action [of the novel] three years before the beginning of the Algerian War on 1 November 1954, and rather during the Korean War and the riots by the French Left against the visit to Paris at the end of

May 1951 of General Mathew Ridgeway who had been the American military commander in Korea” (Gibson 901-02). This historical context, of course, had the double advantage of being critical of American politics while being much less “touchy” for French officials.

One certainly can—and some have done so—accuse Wright of cowardice or opportunism with regards to his (decidedly anti-cosmopolitan) silence about the oppression of a dark-skinned people by the French government. In comparison with William Gardner Smith’s impressive *The Stone Face* (discussed in the next chapter), which courageously criticizes both French politics and the African American silence about it, Wright’s novel pales as a politically engaged piece of writing. The ethical position he assumes in “Island of Hallucination,” however, is nevertheless interesting in the context of my dissertation, because it shows that until the end, Wright stayed committed to the transnational, transracial humanism that Gilroy accords him in both *The Black Atlantic* and *Against Race*. While avoiding a critique of contemporary French politics, Wright uses his last novel to once again assert that in the U.S., as a result of American race relations, the black man fatally (and necessarily) degenerates to the point where he becomes an inhuman “monster” or, in this case, a “machine” that has no courage or ethics left. Even if he chooses the only available way out—expatriation—we learn in “Island of Hallucination,” it takes a huge amount of psychic work to leave the damaging effects of American ideology behind. Still, Wright lets us know at the end of the novel, that is the only road of escape for the African American: Away

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27 I am thinking here of both Bigger Thomas in *Native Son* and Cross Damon in *The Outsider* as ruthless (if at least partially innocent) “monsters” created, according to Wright, by American society.
from the damaging effects of his ‘home,’ he must learn to create a new identity that
does not fully rely on any national, political, or racial ideology, but instead partakes of
and is critical toward all of them.

Wright was not very hopeful that an American audience would be kindly
disposed towards such an “un-American” stance. In a letter to his literary agent Paul
Reynolds, accompanying the manuscript of the novel in early 1959, he writes that he
“can readily think of a hundred reasons why Americans won’t like this book. . . . But
the book is true.”\(^2^8\) And while it is not true, as Wright also claims, that “everything in
the book happened,” since he takes elements of real-life events as well as physical and
psychic traits of people he knew and recombines them freely in order to create his
fictional tale, it seems to have been true to his own understanding of the world at the
time.\(^2^9\) Both Michel Fabre and Hazel Rowley have shown in great detail how much
pressure Wright was under at the time. “We know now,” Rowley writes, “and Wright
knew at the time, that the [American] spies employed within the black communities

\(^{2^8}\) Wright quoted in James Campbell, “The Island Affair,” *The Guardian* (January 7, 2006),
\(^{2^9}\) Ibid. Each of the fictional black Americans in the novel is actually more of a composite of several
historical figures than representative of a particular individual. Nevertheless, these composites seem to
have been reason enough for Ellen Wright to hide her late husband’s novel from the public, including
literary scholars. British literary critic James Campbell recalls how when he mentioned the unpublished
novel to her during a visit in 1988, she “frosted over. The book would ‘never be published in [her] life-
time’, she said. . . . The story involved characters based on people still alive, who might view their pre-
sence in the novel as defamation” (ibid). Campbell assumes that one of the people Ellen Wright referred
to was Richard Gibson, who at some point was not only a member of the black expatriate community in
Paris and also a close friend of William Gardner Smith. Gibson himself points out, however, in a 2005
article, that all of the characters of the novel are an “amalgam of those who where involved” in the his-
torical Gibson Affair, rather than one to one portraits (900). As a result, the manuscript of the novel was
shut away for many years in the Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library at Yale University, and
until this day, only few scholars have had the opportunity to read and write about this controversial
book.
(even in Paris) were mostly black.”\textsuperscript{30} Wright knew that the—in his eyes fatal—tentacles of American intelligence were reaching for him, and as a result, he decided that he could trust no one. But while “Island of Hallucination” is in many ways an expression of Wright’s experienced reality in Paris, he does not use it to advocate radical independence and thus a Cynic cosmopolitan stance. Instead, he (once again) proposes intercultural conversation and human connection as the only way out of the black American’s enforced exile on an “island of hallucination” and full entry into the world.

A sequel to Wright’s earlier novel \textit{The Long Dream} (which is set in the U.S.), “Island of Hallucination” starts on board Flight 409 from New York to Paris via Dublin (which was an obligatory stop-over at the time, since planes could not stand the whole distance), where there sit “forty-odd passengers”: most are American, one is black.\textsuperscript{31} This latter is the novel’s main protagonist; however, we do not learn his name until after we have seen him through the eyes of four of the other American travelers on board: a middle-aged assistant manager from Texas, a 10-year old boy from Arkansas, an Appellate Court Judge from Alabama, and a Roman Catholic missionary from Chicago, headed for the Gold Coast. All of these white Americans eye the young black man in their midst with varying mixtures of apprehension, spite, hate and contempt, all of them considering it an imposition, that a “black nigger” should be traveling with them in the same cabin, served by the same white flight attendant. But, as the omniscient narrator lets us know, in this airliner above the Atlantic, all of them are “a

\textsuperscript{30} Rowley, “The Exile Years.”
\textsuperscript{31} All of the citations in the following refer to the manuscript of the novel held at the Beinecke Library at Yale University, JWJ MSS 3, Box 34, Folder 472. I am deeply grateful to Richard Gibson, who owns a copy of the manuscript archived at Yale, and who was so kind as to allow me to make my own copy of it when I visited him in London to interview him about his former friend, William Gardner Smith.
long way from home” and here, away from American legislation, they can “do nothing” about the African American’s presence and thus must bear it (2).

The center of all this unwanted attention is 18-year old Rex Tucker from Mississippi, a young man known as Fishbelly. He has taken flight from the negative energy around him, sinking into a deep slumber, but his dreams keep him caught in the same logic; they have him running frantically among coffins, in one of which a white girl is incessantly calling out to him (2). Fishbelly, we learn right away, is an ex-convict, having served two years in jail for allegedly raping a white woman—a crime he claims to not have committed, attributing his conviction instead to American racism. In the all-white environment of the transatlantic airplane, Fishbelly feels more than just a little uncomfortable. While he is used to being constructed as a disenfranchised black subject under the gaze of white Americans, the changed ideological context they are all in on this transatlantic flight to Europe deeply unsettles him. He knows that in this new context he is allowed to share the cabin with white people, but having never experienced anything else but American “separate but equal” ideology, he cannot simply switch his understanding of himself. Furthermore, he has no idea how to behave in this context. When the flight attendant wants to accompany him out of the airplane in Dublin, he insists on walking four feet behind her, because he is, as she realizes, “afraid to be seen walking beside a white woman” (11). The French flight attendant, for her part, is as baffled and touched by such behavior as the few other French people on the airplane, all of whom display no racism at all, and instead observe “the black boy with laughing eyes,” because “Frenchmen smiled when they saw
black people” (9). At first glance, we could thus assume that Wright is setting up a simple confrontation between “bad” American and “good” French attitudes towards blacks. In 1959, however, when he was writing this novel, he had been living too long in France to believe in such easy dichotomies.

The French gaze in “Island of Hallucination” is by no means “good” or even neutral; rather, it constitutes a different kind of ideological interpellation, one not quite as obvious for an African American like Fishbelly. In the French imagination of the time, Rebecca Ruquist explains in her article on the novel, black people stood for pureness, health, primitivity, and other “‘positive’ racial essentialisms” (294). Wright, she argues, “challenges this aspect of French culture,” as the French in his novel clearly “project their own primitivity, irrationality, fear, and mysticism onto black male bodies” (294). Indeed, we repeatedly find references—especially by French women—to the “healthy” and “wholesome” nature of black people, culminating in the smiling black face of “the Negro Jazz King, Trombone Bailey” on an advertisement in Paris, which Fishbelly and his friend Harrison ponder at the end of the novel. “A tense European seeing that face experiences a sense of relaxation” (IoH 515), Harrison explains, highlighting the fact that French ideology interpellates blacks as Other just as much as American ideology, if in very different ways.

Within the first few scenes of “Island of Hallucination,” Wright thus presents many of what will become the central themes of his novel: the flight to France as an attempted escape from American racism for the black American, the conflict and confusion of the African American as he is ‘hailed’ by new ideologies that attempt to
interpellate him as a different kind of subject, his inability to let go of learned fears and behavior patterns, on the one hand, and the friendly attitudes of French people toward blacks, which turn out to be not quite all they seem, on the other. Another central theme is introduced only a little later: the many suspicions and animosities that—in Wright’s version of black Paris—poison the relationships between American expatriates, all of whom believe of one another that they are spying for the Stalinists, for the Trotskyists, or for the French or American governments. Most of them actually do. Only one man, Ned Harrison, himself also a black American, seems to be above these games and betrayals.32

The only one with a cosmopolitan (and also decidedly Marxist) outlook, Harrison represents the voice of reason and wisdom in the novel and lectures Fishbelly—in an often highly didactical manner—on how he should act and live. Not only is Harrison quite unhappy about the fact that Fishbelly has, in his excitement about readily accessible white French women—become a pimp in Paris, he also criticizes Fishbelly’s inability to let go of his American racial conditioning and his utter disinterest in French (or any) politics. But Fishbelly does not want to hear about morality in the handling of other people, or about political engagement. Having left American reali-

32 Wright scholars are not entirely in agreement about which real-life person or persons are depicted in the character of Ned Harrison. Hazel Rowley writes that the “slightly rotund, smiling, and unusually self-possessed, Harrison is clearly based on Ollie Harrington” (2001, 488), and James Campbell seems to agree with her that Harrison is at least partly modeled after Harrington. Michel Fabre, however, sees Wright himself in many of Harrison’s traits and convictions, and Richard Gibson, who was himself not only part of the black community in Paris, but also finds himself partially depicted in the novel, argues that Harrison is “based in my view more on Noel Torres, who was an African American lawyer working for the US Army at its logistics base in Chateauroux, than on Ollie Harrington or Wright himself” (905).
ties behind, he experiences Paris as a kind of dream, and he wants it to remain a
dream, a hallucination, in which he can live safely and freely, caring about nothing but
how to make money and have sex with white women. Throughout much of the novel,
he retains this detached and uncaring attitude, understanding himself as a radically
independent man. Now outside of the United States, he feels, he must be free to live
on his own private island. Again, we recognize not only Cross Damon in this attitude,
but also the Richard Wright of Pagan Spain, who declares that he belongs nowhere
and needs no attachments. And once again, we see this attitude fail in practice.

No matter how much he likes to imagine himself as radically independent and
self-sufficient, Fishbelly cannot leave America behind. Like all of his black compat-
riots, he proves incapable of letting go of his habituated responses to American racism.
As Harrison so aptly points out, this is “the problem with black Americans in Paris. . .
. They are free to do what they like, but they’ve no notion of what to do. . . . Even
when they are free, they can’t be free, act freely” (228). Fishbelly soon comes to
understand what Harrison means. Sitting in the Café Tournon, he realizes “that the
American blacks gathered in this café because it was only among themselves that their
off-beat reactions made meaning. They’re just as much in jail as I was in Mississippi”
(110). Free as they are, all of the black expatriates in Wright’s novel continue to live
with the dark emotions and pathological behaviors they have learned in their subject-
ion at home.

Worst affected by this American ideological conditioning is the main villain of
the novel, Mechanical, who has become both mean and masochistic as a result of his
experiences. Disfigured by his scarred face as well as by his shifty gaze and his robot-like movements, the always fearful, unattractive, almost obscene bisexual character is not only an expression of Wright’s considerable homophobia, but also of his conviction that life in the United States literally destroyed a black man. Mechanical, Harrison explains to Fishbelly, is “emotionally naked,” unable to relate to any other human being and feeling rejected by all of them (507). His traumatic experiences in the U.S. have left Mechanical absolutely alone and insensitive, without a trace of moral consciousness. He makes his money as a “double-croesser,” posing as a Stalinist in front of the Communist community of Paris, when in reality he is a Trotskyite who denounces his Stalinist ‘comrades’ to both the French and the American governments. And even about his Trotskyism, we cannot be entirely sure, because in the end, there is nothing that Mechanical really believes in. When, in the melodramatic ending of the novel, he is about to hang himself from one of the gargoyles of Notre Dame because his ruthless double-crossing has been exposed, he yells again and again a single phrase at the police, his compatriots and the thousands of Parisians who have gathered underneath him: “YOU CAN’T UNDERSTAND!” (492). Nobody can understand his motivations, his actions, or the excruciating pain that fills him, because, as Harrison explains to Fishbelly, in his French refuge he is living on an ‘island of hallucination,’ a dark private world filled with horrifying images from the past and utterly disconnected from real life in France.

33 Mechanical is thought by most scholars to be some kind of unhappy fictional composite of James Baldwin and William Gardner Smith.
Fishbelly, although somewhat less desperate than Mechanical, is in many ways in the same situation. Yvette tells him, “At heart, you’re really a colonial, an exploiter. You live in France and you don’t even know what’s going on and you really don’t care. What are you doing here? You don’t speak French. You understand nothing” (149). Harrison even goes so far as to declare that Fishbelly’s disconnected existence in Paris is “not living from any point of view, in terms of any culture or civilization. There’s nothing in such a barren activity to sustain you, to nourish you. You’re not related to anything or anybody. You’ve no roots. You’d have to be an exceptional man to survive under such conditions. It has been done, but not too often. You die slowly inside of you before your body dies if you keep on like that” (222). One needs sustaining roots, Harrison explains here, and meaningful emotional relations to others, in order to exist as human being. It is human relations that “sustain” and “nourish” human life, and without them, a person is as good as dead, even if he or she might still be alive physically. However, and this is important, nowhere does Harrison—clearly Wright’s mouthpiece in the novel—suggest that these roots have to be in one’s native soil. After all, he himself seems rather rooted and sustained, although he has been living away from "home" for many years. What he asks Fishbelly to do is thus not to go ‘back to his roots’ in the U.S., but rather to live differently in Paris (or anywhere else), in a way that is connected to the lives of people around him, that allows him to sink new roots in different ideological contexts. This, in Harrison’s eyes, is the only way to finally get beyond the American nation, to stop being constructed as a black subject by racist American ideology.
Like *The Outsider*, “Island of Hallucination” thus ends with an affirmation of human connection and of the absolute necessity of an Other for human (self-)understanding and development. Mechanical, who is unable to learn that lesson and hence unable to ever go beyond the American nation ideologically, finds relief only in suicide. Fishbelly, on the other hand, might be able to escape such a terrible destiny. While he has come to understand that because of his “socially inherited black emotions” (256), he “could never be French even if he lived in France a million years” (316), he also does not want to remain caught any longer in American ideology. At the end of Wright’s 517-page long manuscript, we still do not know for certain which way things will go for him. What we do know, however, is that in Harrison, he has at least found a true friend and mentor, an Other that has helped him to change his mind. Fishbelly abandons his island of hallucination in the end to face in Gadamerian fashion the challenge of the Other, in order to better understand himself, and in order to slowly leave behind his accustomed identity of a black man in racist America. He now believes Harrison when he is being told he “can’t win the way [he is] living now” (513), and that he needs to “accept the responsibility” for what he does (514). At the end, although he is “feeling a terrible loneliness,” Fishbelly knows that he “won’t leave France” (517), won’t go back to the U.S., but also won’t run away once again. We leave him walking back to his apartment, “toward his problems, toward his life, and, what he was hoping, toward his world” (517). Once again we find, as in *The Outsider*, an ending that, while not really offering a resolution, points into a direction that might lead out of the darkness and destruction engulfing the main protagonist. It seems to
have been the direction that Wright saw for himself as well, even if he was not sure he would be able to follow it.

Wright finished “Island of Hallucination” only a few months before his premature death at the age of 52. As Michel Fabre, Hazel Rowley and many other scholars have attested, his depression had gotten so bad at the time that it bordered on paranoia. He felt himself threatened from many sides, not least by the members of the African American expatriate community around him. He had had disagreements with James Baldwin and Chester Himes, both of whom had criticized him as a writer. He also was angry at William Gardner Smith and Richard Gibson, believing both to be on the payroll of the CIA—Spying on black American expatriates with Marxist leanings such as himself. “Island of Hallucination” is, among other things, a forceful expression of Wright’s manifold suspicions and fears in the Cold War climate of the late 1950s. To this day, it is not entirely clear how well-founded his allegations about his fellow expatriates were. The long files that both the CIA and the FBI accumulated on Wright over the years make quite clear that he was indeed under heavy surveillance, but who exactly was spying on him, and whether or not the CIA had something to do with his sudden and mysterious death, is still unclear.

34 Baldwin’s well-known essay “Everybody’s Protest Novel” (1949) was mainly targeted at Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin, but it was also an attack on so-called “protest novels” in contemporary African American literature, which, in his eyes, was so focused on social protest that it became sterile and uninteresting as fiction. The prime example for such a novel was, according to Baldwin, Wright’s Native Son. Wright was never able to forgive the younger writer, to whom he had been a mentor and friend.

35 Hazel Rowley even goes so far as to call Smith Wright’s “archenemy” (2001, 499).

36 Hazel Rowley has written extensively about this aspect of Wright’s life. It should be mentioned in this context, though, that Wright himself met with similar allegations. In 1956, none other than Kay Boyle—who was friends with Wright—wrote in a letter to him that “there is a story, a rumor, about you that is going about . . . that you are known to work with the State Department, or the FBI, I don’t know
What is unambiguous, however, is that at the end of his life, Wright was, in Hazel Rowley’s words, “a lonely outsider” (477)—despite his many calls for human connectedness. After all, his similarities with all the groups and individuals he was affiliated with politically—the Pan-African intellectuals as well as the French existentialists—only went so far: practically none of them were African American, and those who were did not share his cosmopolitan and transracial vision. In a letter to James Holness in 1959, he wrote not without bitterness that, as an “American Negro,” he was completely “alone. I belong to no gang or clique or party or organization. If I’m attacked there is nobody to come to my aid or defense.”

However, in the very same letter, he also writes of his “right to fight for the Africans,” thus clearly declaring his cosmopolitan solidarity with other human beings, and even with particular groups. This is again the same ambivalence that we find in *The Outsider*, in “Island of Hallucination” and in many of his non-fiction texts. The detached vision of the Cynic and the multiply attached vision of the Stoic both stayed with Wright as ideals until the very end of his life, and the enormous tension between the two—finding expression in many of his writings—seems at times to almost have torn him apart.

But while this particular combination of allegiances on the one hand and radical outsidersness on the other eventually estranged Wright from most of his compatri-
ots, it also makes him fascinating. It makes him fascinating not only because, as Gilroy puts it, “in his life and in his work, the tension between the claims of racial particularity on one side and the appeal of those modern universals that appear to transcend race on the other arises in the sharpest possible form” (1993, 147), and also not only because it indicates that Wright embodied Mignolo’s notion of ‘critical’ cosmopolitanism, a cosmopolitanism thought from the margins.39 Wright’s life suggests still another concept of cosmopolitanism, one that incorporates Mignolo’s term but goes beyond it temporally, allowing for moments of transcendence. The mixed success and failure of Wright’s shifting system of allegiances indicates that he lived out, in his ever-expanding horizon, a cosmopolitanism that always remained ‘in process.’

The fact that Wright never succeeded in becoming an ideal cosmopolitan could, together with the pronounced unhappiness of his final days, be understood to support the claims of those conservative critics who insist that we cannot get by without a firm grounding in family and nation. However, one of the values in studying Wright’s life and work is exactly that it helps us see how patriotic attachments are not nearly so straight-forwardly available to all as the proponents of ‘patriotic’ cosmopolitanism seem to take for granted. Wright, too, might have been a much less critical cosmopolitan had American ideology interpellated him as a full-fledged citizen. His insider-outsiderness to American society, the fact that he was hailed by conflicting ideologies, sparked not only his critical stance toward American realities, but also, in

39 Ross Posnock, interestingly, also called Wright a ‘critical cosmopolitan,’ even before the appearance of Mignolo’s article. “Wright’s critical cosmopolitanism,” he writes in Color and Culture (1998), “and its interrogation of race belong to what has been called an ‘eclipsed tradition in black intellectual culture’” (10). Like Paul Gilroy, Posnock sees Wright’s ‘transracial utopia’ as one of the pillars of his emerging cosmopolitanism.
the long run, his cosmopolitan process. The fact that this process involved and included a life-long struggle with American ideas and ideals illustrates how difficult it is to transcend one’s historical situatedness and the ideological interpellations that come along with it, the best of intentions notwithstanding. This is the inevitable dilemma of the “in-process” cosmopolitan. What matters most—and the ability to privilege this is one great value of a processual understanding of ideals—were Wright’s efforts to fulfill a cosmopolitan ideal. He continued trying, remained in the process, even after he had realized through hard experience what a lonely task that could be. As he said once to a young woman who asked him if his own ideas and ideals would be suited to make people happy, “My dear, I do not deal in happiness; I deal in meaning” (WML xxix).

In 1952, William Gardner Smith welcomed the chief editor of an American magazine into his shabby quarters at the Hôtel Tournon, at the time a popular haunt of black American expatriates in Paris. In his autobiographical *Return to Black America* (1970), Smith recalls this moment and the editor’s “utterly stupefied look as he stood in the doorway of my little attic room, fresh from his luxurious American apartment, staring at the ugly peeling wallpaper, the lumpy iron bed, the bare lopsided table, the rickety chairs, the worn linoleum, and the washstand attached precariously to the wall.” “My God,” the bewildered editor exclaims, “Do you mean to tell me it’s for this that you turned down the job [as associate editor] I offered you?” Smith recollects himself answering with amusement and conviction: “Yes, precisely for this” (4).\(^1\)

At the time of this incident, the 25-year-old Smith had turned down a lot more than just a job offer in the United States. His young wife Mary, who had come with him to Paris in 1951 but been unable to deal with their bohemian lifestyle and impoverished living conditions there, had returned to Philadelphia without him. His mother and sister wrote letter after letter, asking when he would finally be coming home. Everyone he knew back in the States, it seemed, wanted him back as soon as possible. But although Smith cared, in his way, deeply for his family and wife, he was not planning to return to the U.S. any time soon. “I can’t be settled for life,” he writes

\(^1\) Smith tells the story in *Return to Black America* without giving away the name of the editor or the magazine.
in a 1952 letter to his mother, “I want to move. I want always to live, to discover something new. The boredom of marriage nearly drove me crazy.” Leaving behind what he considered the double confinements of matrimony and black life in the U.S., Smith opted for what was at the time a peculiarly American artistic dream: to live freely and write novels in the liberal atmosphere of the Parisian Left Bank.

This dream, along with Smith’s expressed need for newness, liberty and perpetual change, resonates with the values of the modernist brand of cosmopolitanism. This was the cosmopolitanism, it will be recalled, that celebrated above all dislocation, freedom, novelty, and cultural aptitude. At first glance, Smith was operating on very similar grounds to those that brought the modernist “bands of permanently displaced tourists”—to use Caren Kaplan’s term again—across the Atlantic. Like the Lost Generation, Smith was fed up with American society; like the Lost Generation, he was hoping that a new and strange environment would help him become a good writer; and like the Lost Generation, he was, to some degree, on the run. But there were several important differences between Smith and earlier, white-skinned expatriates such as Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Stein, and others. First, as Smith himself explained in a Paris Review interview, the older expatriate group “came for positive reasons” like a cheap exchange rate and cultural romanticism, and were thus pulled, while black expatriates like himself were pushed out of the United States for a number of reasons, the most important being “politics and race,” meaning McCarthyism and segregation (165). Another key difference between Smith and most of the modernist expatriates lies in

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2 Smith to Edith Earle, March 12, 1952. I am greatly indebted to Smith’s sister Phyllis M. Ford for allowing me to quote from Smith’s personal correspondence.
the passion, depth and political interest with which he explored and adopted new cultural environments. None of the modernist expatriates came even close to being as thoroughly engaged in the culture and politics of France, not even the somewhat differently attuned Henry Miller.

Part of the reason why Smith got so well acquainted with French politics and culture so quickly, was his new job. After his arrival in Paris in 1951, he kept working as a journalist for American magazines (as so many literary expatriates) but he soon also found a position at the French news service Agence France Presse. Diving deeply into French life for his new employer, he became, at the same time, an integral member of the black expatriate group around Richard Wright that included not only African American but also African intellectuals and artists. Between these two poles, Smith’s life in Paris soon took on a transformative quality, making homecoming and reintegration into the society of his native country seem more and more impossible.

Like Wright, Smith never returned permanently to the United States and was eventually buried in the Parisian cemetery Père Lachaise. Unlike Wright, however, he did not remain outside of French society, but early on dived deeply into Parisian life and culture, working for a French employer, marrying a Frenchwoman (after asking Mary for a divorce), and generally becoming, as Michel Fabre puts it in *From Harlem to Paris*, “what he had chosen to be: a cosmopolitan, worldly mind, inclined to enjoy the more leisurely pace of European life . . . and capable of adapting to diverse cultural milieus” (238). Fabre’s emphasis on the fact that Smith was fluent in French and “shared the French life-style to the point of marrying a Parisian and raising a family
there” (238) underlines Smith's quickness in adapting to new cultural surroundings. Smith himself stresses just this in a letter to his mother in December 1951: “I don't feel like a stranger at all,” he explains there, “I feel at home in Paris.” And while this statement, made only a few months after his arrival in France, might entail a good deal of stubborn enthusiasm vis-à-vis a skeptical family member, there is no doubt that with time Smith did indeed manage to make the French capital his own.

Smith’s cultural literacy and general curiosity and flexibility certainly facilitated his cosmopolitan development, but it is important to note that they were not what *constituted* his cosmopolitanism. If they were, he would be only quantitatively – and not qualitatively – different from his modernist peers. Smith became indeed, as Fabre writes, a worldly minded cosmopolitan, but he did so in a sense that far exceeded not only the modernist version of the concept, but also certain current versions of it. So, for instance, Smith's life took him well beyond the cosmopolitanism of cultural adaptability and appreciation that Kwame Anthony Appiah celebrates when he writes that the rooted cosmopolitan “can entertain the possibility of a world in which everyone is . . . taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different people” (Appiah 1994, 22). Appiah’s rooted cosmopolitanism relies on tolerance, respect and appreciation for the Other; it describes a state of mind in which everybody loves their own countries and cultures, and enjoys the foreign countries and culture that other people love as their own. Smith’s passionate affirmation of a common humanity across all differences, however, his critical thinking in large-scale, even universal dimensions, and his transnational and transracial solidarity

3 Smith in a letter to Edith Earle, November 1, 1951.
with the oppressed—as expressed throughout all his fiction and non-fiction—go far beyond simple tolerance and appreciation. Rather, they exemplify the critical variety of *cosmopolitanism in process* that is the focus of this dissertation. Critical or in-process cosmopolitanism, to recap, is here understood as an open-minded, ongoing expansion of personal horizons. It is critical, because it entails an increasingly analytical-skeptical stance toward all ideological positions, as well as an engagement for Others across borders.

One of my central theoretical concerns has been the question of what combination of factors helps *produce* cosmopolitan mindsets. In chapter 2, I offered the hypothesis that cosmopolitanism is a matter of both (continuously changing) socio-cultural conditions and personal agency, grounding a consideration of the latter partly in Paul Smith’s assertion that “a person is not simply determined and dominated by the ideological pressures of any overarching discourse or ideology but is also the agent of a certain discernment” (xxxiv). Smith’s subject-individual is capable of some sort of choice *precisely* in those moments of interpellation by two or more ideological discourses which contradict one another. Such moments or spaces of agency are critical in driving an in-process cosmopolitanism forward, wherever that may lead. Cosmopolitanism in this strong sense requires—for both its initiation and its continuation—particularly strong conflicts between a wide variety of ideological discourses, such as can sometimes only be produced by dislocation. How much agency arises out of these moments of ideological conflict depends, as I want to explore via William Gardner Smith's work, to a large degree on how much the subject in question is engaged *emo-
tionally. Understanding, with Martha Nussbaum, emotions as a mode of cognition, I argue that in moments when a subject is interpellated by conflicting ideologies, it is of crucial importance that she experience something as being at stake, either for herself or for people about whom she cares. Such emotional involvement, it seems to me, is what allows subjects to open up to new, conflicting ideologies on a deep level, rather than staying committed to the ones which so far have constructed their identity. A cosmopolitan identity—one that understands itself not primarily through citizenship in a particular nation or membership of a particular race or religious community, but instead through citizenship in the world at large, with many layered and overlapping attachments—can only arise, I believe, out of such repeated moments of ideological interpellations. The deeper a person's emotional experience (positive or negative) of the people and matters at stake, the more he may be able to change his mind, to shift his prejudices, to understand and to act differently. And, with the conflicting emotional forces set in play through one's constitution as different sorts of subjects, the choices one makes regarding action at times of ambivalence may be seen as the co-production of oneself as a different sort of subject.\footnote{For example, the German or French or Swiss national entering and leaving the United States is constructed as Other in a way that can be frightening and alienating. This interpellation as \textit{foreigner} contradicts, especially for, say, a white ethnic German, his interpellation in Germany as \textit{citizen}. To the extent that he develops strong emotional ties with people in the United States, however, he will find this new subject-position difficult to shake off. Foreign, he soon finds, \textit{is indeed what he is}. Such an experience would not readily leave him upon his return to Germany, and might indeed prompt him to take action there in solidarity with Germany's more or less disenfranchised immigrant populations, none of whom are considered truly German, truly nationals. Equally, the same person might visit the United States, prefer the company of fellow German-speakers and nationals, and reject as xenophobic and obnoxious his construction as \textit{foreigner} while in the U.S. In this case, we could imagine him returning to Germany with a basically apt perspective on the deep flaws of American nationalism, but still more or less oblivious or indifferent to the evils of ethnic nationalism in Germany itself. The same basic principle holds true, of course, if he remains in the United States as an immigrant, or if he travels on to Chile or to Laos or anywhere else. His degree of emotional attachment to others who are part of the community}
open the way for a continuous co-production of self in conversation with others, a mode of development that can initiate a deep openness, though it does not have to.

This opening movement is exactly what we can observe in Smith’s oeuvre. His life and work are particularly well suited for an examination of how conflicting ideologies resulting from repeated dislocation can, in combination with open-mindedness, sensitivity, and emotional cognition, further the development of a cosmopolitan mindset. Smith’s personal experiences as a young soldier, for example, and the autobiographical novel *Last of the Conquerors* (1948) that sprang from them, show us what it can mean for a young African American to come to a country that treats black Americans so differently that his own naturalized understanding gets turned upside down—the result of ideological discourses colliding. If we follow Smith’s life after the successful publication of that first novel, we observe a complex cosmopolitan process that perhaps culminates in Smith’s most accomplished and mature novel, the 1963 *The Stone Face*, in which his critical cosmopolitanism reaches a new level. Furthermore, Smith’s subsequent life choices as they are described and explained in *Return to Black America* (1970) show that his outlook continued to develop in this respect. Thus, while each of these three books—*Last of the Conquerors, The Stone Face*, and *Return to Black America*—is valuable in itself for many reasons, they become particularly fascinating if we use them to trace Smith’s individual cos-

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interpellating him—through its representative ideological apparatuses—will shape the extent to which he must negotiate the claims of that interpellation on the level of identity. And that, in turn, will shape his capacity for greater openness to other Others (or greater closedness: choice is indeed a double-edged sword, and we do well to remember that people default to fear at least as often as they opt for love).
mopolitan process and the role that conflicting ideologies, open-mindedness, and emotional involvement played in his changing world views and life choices.

Much of Smith’s cosmopolitan development seems to have involved the negotiation of an ambiguous quality that the writer himself addresses in all of his books as “sensitivity.” It is a quality, he insists, that allows for creative imagination and social concern on the one hand, but that on the other hand makes its bearer overly vulnerable and exposed to the brutality and ugliness of the world in its current incarnation. Sensitivity, then, is not only the capacity to be tuned to what is going on in one’s human and non-human surroundings, it includes also the willingness to engage openly and emphatically with them – even if such engagement is painful. There is little doubt that Smith thought of himself as a sensitive man, and that he believed sensitivity to be a particularly precarious quality in a black man like himself. In his novels, sensitivity is consistently depicted as something a black American male—and perhaps anyone—cannot really afford, something for which he must inevitably pay a high price. At the same time, it seems Smith cannot help but affirm the beauty and importance of this delicate quality, which attunes people’s thinking and feeling to what is going on around them and makes them care about it. It is out of this tension that much of Smith’s cosmopolitanism—fictional and actual—arises.

It was quite unusual, even daring, for a black male writer at the time to openly advocate a quality like sensitivity. While the quality itself had traditionally been coded as feminine, Smith's pairing it with love relationships at the center of what often
amounted to protest novels, or at least deeply political novels, was a risk. If Smith thus insists on the sensitivity of his characters as well as on his own, he clearly and consciously moves away from the conventions of black masculinity of his time. To acknowledge sensitivity and emotionality as important parts of our meaning-making faculties was/is not generally seen as an adequate (or masculine) approach to problems of racial and social injustice, but when we compare Smith’s heroes with those of Richard Wright, say, we are struck by their vulnerability, compassion, and overall pacifism. This does not mean they don’t feel the same anger at American society as do Wright’s heroes. They do. But unlike Bigger Thomas or Cross Damon, for instance, Smith’s heroes have a tendency to be observant, thoughtful, and conciliatory. Most of them despise violence (including the violence they feel inside themselves) and become violent only if there is no other way to defend themselves or someone they love. Their cosmopolitan lessons they learn, without exception, in and through their emotional engagements with others – be that in love relationships or friendships.

As the literary careers of both Kay Boyle and Pearl Buck show, it was not without risk even for white, female writers to put sentiment and love relationships at the center of their politically motivated novels, which could then too easily be dismissed as sentimental novels of no literary value, written for a (female) mass audience to make money. For a black male writer like William Gardner Smith, a foregrounding of emotion and the use of a sensitive male hero was thus doubtless riskier still. It is certainly interesting to view Smith’s sensitive heroes in the context of bell hooks’s 2004 We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity. Here, hooks argues that black American men have experienced a crisis of masculinity as a result of the patriarchal imperialism they were subjected to in U.S. society. Black men, hooks maintains, have been taught to “solve” problems with violence, and they are feared and respected for their force and dangerousness. What these men need most, however, is that which they get least: love and emotion. Their greatest desires, according to hooks, are an ability to engage with intimacy and a longing for intersubjective love. They can only fulfill these desires if they emulate the process that black women have gone through, building up their self-esteem and accepting (emotional) responsibility. Smith’s heroes are interesting in this context because they do exactly what hooks calls for: they engage emotionally and spiritually not only with women, but also with their own roles as black males in a white-dominated patriarchal society.

It is interesting, in this context, to go back to Wright’s The Outsider, in which Cross Damon seems to learn the lesson that “alone a man is nothing” as a result of his own ever-increasing but in the final effect futile violence. However, if we look more closely at Damon’s breakdown at the end of the novel,
This makes Smith’s novels an ideal arena within which to develop the idea that the intelligence of emotions plays an important role in a person’s cosmopolitan development. In the following analysis of Smith’s fiction and non-fiction, I want thus to foreground two points: first, I will explore—through his novels—how Smith’s cosmopolitanism got more sophisticated as a result of his different experiences abroad and the clashes of ideologies that resulted from those. Second, I want to examine what role ‘sensitivity’ and emotional involvement plays in the development of cosmopolitan agency in the moments of those clashes. If we follow Martha Nussbaum’s understanding of emotions as a mode of cognition, we accept that we as individuals can and will change our emotions—even socially induced ones—once they cannot stand up to the criticisms that we levy as a result of a changed understanding. But we also accept that the reverse is true: that changed emotions will in turn—as a mode of cognition—change the way we understand things, the way we use reason. We can observe the workings of both processes repeatedly in the sensitive heroes of Smith’s novels, where they are presented as the engine of cosmopolitan agency in moments of conflicting ideological interpellation.

The themes of Smith’s five published books overlap and influence each other, not only but especially on the topic of cosmopolitan sensitivity. This is particularly true for the three books I will consider here in some depth. If international/interracial love and the dehumanizing politics of segregation is the topic of Last of the Conquer-
rors, and the flight to a European “racial paradise” is presented as the only possible remedy to the problem, *The Stone Face* features a protagonist who has successfully escaped to Europe, where he lives openly an international/interracial love relationship with a Polish Holocaust survivor. There, however, he is not only forced to realize that racism in France is different but just as deeply entrenched as in the U.S.; he is also infused with flashes of guilt whenever he reads about the courageous struggle of the Civil Rights movement in his home country. The narrating I of Smith’s autobiographical *Return to Black America*, finally, addresses such feelings of guilt directly as he takes a look at the life of black Americans on three continents (America, Europe and Africa), reflecting on the uses and hazards of dislocation. What displacement meant for his own cosmopolitan development is perhaps best summed up in Smith’s unpublished manuscript “Through Dark Eyes,” which he wrote shortly before his premature death at the age of 47 in 1974:

> It is fascinating to shift vantage points, change worlds, turn the prism slowly before the eye. I was, once, an American, albeit a black one. . . . The outward trappings of my Americanism faded as the years went by, but one thing did not change: the blackness of my skin. I was, in the United States, a black man in a racist white society; in Europe, particularly France, a black man in a less racist society; and in Africa for the first time in my life a black man in a black society. The progression was psychologically stupefying. (10)

Smith clearly associates the many times in his life when he shifted vantage points as a result of new experiences with his repeated dislocation. In fact, the process of ever-shifting vantage points, ever-shifting prejudices, which was to determine the course of his life, goes back at least to his being drafted into the U.S. Army and sent to postwar Germany in 1946. It was in Germany that his understanding of himself as a black
American was disrupted for the first time. There, he was shocked into the recognition that nothing about the way black people were treated in the U.S. was ‘natural.’ He decided to translate this shock and the resulting recognition into a novel, which he first titled “Dark Tide over Deutschland,” but which was eventually published as Last of the Conquerors. Paul Gilroy is thus right when he states, in Against Race (2000), that the formation of Smith’s cosmopolitan vision can be traced back to Last of the Conquerors (Gilroy 308), even if he, in my view, gives not enough attention to Smith’s rather obvious “blind spots” there with regard to German racism toward blacks. In the following, I will show how exactly Smith’s cosmopolitanism matured between his first and his last novel, with special attention not only to Smith’s shifting vantage points, but also to his changing psychological need for a racism-free utopia. In Last of the Conquerors, we will see, Smith embraces cosmopolitan values that are recognized and affirmed as a result of emotional engagement, but also seems to need to create a sort of racial paradise or utopia—in this case post-war Germany—to compare and contrast with the United States. While such comparing and contrasting occurs later, in The Stone Face, as well, one looks in vain for a racial paradise there. Smith, I argue, does not need such a fiction at the latter point in his life. While he has not let go of sensitivity and emotional engagement as the driving forces for cosmopolitan agency in The Stone Face, he makes clear there that the racism-free paradise of Last of the Conquerors does not exist anywhere. Racial tolerance, appreciation and equality are goods that cosmopolitans such as himself will have to fight for wherever they are, and their antagonists might change any time—not only in their nationalities and religious
affiliations, but in their skin colors as well. It is in the shift from the former to the latter perspective that we observe the process of Smith’s critical cosmopolitanism, and recognize in it the continuous revisions of preliminary judgments that drive it forward.

The Fantasy of ‘Away’: Cosmopolitan Blind Spots in *Last of the Conquerors*

Smith began writing *Last of the Conquerors* in 1947, on the return trip from his duty with the U.S. occupation forces in Germany. There, he had served for eight months as a clerk-typist with the 661st Truck Company in Berlin. In the novel, he skillfully combines the love story between a black American soldier and a white German woman with a celebration of human sameness and a scathing critique of racism and segregation in the U.S. army and America as a whole. He contrasts the latter quite effectively with the warm welcome and friendly acceptance that the German population offered African American GIs. This debut novel was a critical and commercial success in the late 1940s, not least because of its explosive political force.

*Last of the Conquerors* is a finely tuned and courageous novel that does not shy away from depicting the situation in the segregated U.S. army as Smith himself experienced it. The novel also succeeds in portraying a sentiment that was very common among African American GIs in post-war Europe: the bitterness that springs out of the realization that black people are actually not naturally and everywhere second-class citizens, but only at “home.” In the novel, the overall tenor among the black soldiers is perhaps best summed up in the words of one of the major characters, Ser-
geant Murdoch, who explains after a few drinks to his compatriots why he likes Germany:

It’s the first place I was ever treated like a goddamn man. You know what I learned here? . . . now I know what it is to walk into any place, any place, without worrying about whether they serve colored. . . . You know what the hell I learned? That a nigger ain’t no different from nobody else. I had to come over here to learn that. I hadda come over here and let the Nazis teach me that. They don’t teach that stuff back in the land of the free. (LoC 67)

The clashing of American and post-war German ideological contexts that is described here opens up the space for a new understanding. It is in this space that Murdoch and other African Americans in the occupation army recognize that they do not necessarily have to submit to American ideological scripts, and that they, as Paul Smith would put it, are the agents “of a certain discernment” and thus able to resist (xxxiv). The bitterness in Murdoch’s words shows how much he is emotionally affected, when he points to the almost absurd irony that of all people it is the “Nazis”—that is the post-war German population—who teach him the meaning of racial equality. Murdoch is deeply moved by the experience of being treated and respected simply as a human being, and not as a ‘black man’ or ‘nigger’. He cherishes his new-found equality and consequently fears nothing more than going home, back to the Jim Crow South. This affective response to the experienced clashing of ideological scripts leads in turn to a rational response: neither Murdoch nor any of the other black GIs in Smith’s novel want to go back to the U.S. Instead, they want to keep living in an apparently racism-free Europe. This is why they desert, disappear, or flee into the Soviet Zone, where, so they have heard, blacks are treated better than in the United States.
Hayes Dawkins, the main protagonist of the novel, shares the emotions and concerns of his compatriots. Not only has he gotten used to being allowed into 'any place,' he has also fallen in love with a German girl, “a white girl,” as he says half-astonished to himself, when lying next to his girlfriend on the Wannsee beach: “No one stared as we lay on the beach together. . . . Odd it seemed to me that here, in the land of hate, I should find this one all-important phase of democracy. And suddenly I felt bitter” (LoC 27). For Dawkins, as for Murdoch, the cosmopolitan experience of displacement has become an eye-opener. What he never could have imagined possible, that the American treatment of blacks might be something culture-specific and avoidable, is now proven to him again and again in his everyday interactions with his white girlfriend and other Germans. Like Murdoch, Dawkins consequently does not want to go back to the U.S., but fantasizes instead about a life with Ilse in Germany, of moving with her into a clean, small house in Wannsee, “with ivy on the walls and a flower garden,” with German friends coming over, and people respectfully inquiring: “Wie geht’s Herr Dawkins?” (LoC 71; "How are you, Mr. Dawkins?"). Black life in the U.S., he has learned in Germany, is not the only black life possible.

Because Last of the Conquerors is an autobiographical book, many of the experiences described in the novel were in fact rather typical for black GIs in post-war Germany. The German reception of black US soldiers was—after 1945, that is—indeed often a warm, even cheerful one. If American GIs in general were the Germans’ favorite group of occupation soldiers—much preferred to the French and British, and especially to the Russians—black GIs were considered by far the most
compassionate and least condescending among the occupiers. They were known to be especially generous with their seemingly endless supplies of food and of goods difficult to acquire in postwar Germany: coffee, sugar, chocolate, cigarettes. The German population returned the favor with friendliness and respect, in many ways.\(^8\)

Such thriving intercultural contact did not go unnoticed. As historian Maria Höhn points out, “the encounters of black GIs with Germans were so positive that the African American press in the United States repeatedly described the experience of the GIs in Germany to indict American racism at home” (91). Postwar democratization was, as historian Heide Fehrenbach notes, not “a one-way process, a forcible transformation of West German society, but instead . . . a two-way process, in the course of which not only German but also American society got more equal and liberal” (4).

There are few today who would dispute that the experiences of black GIs in Europe—and the articles that were written about those—played a significant role in both the desegregation of the American army and the strengthening of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 60s. Some such articles were written by William Gardner Smith himself. In a 1947 article for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, he quotes a fellow soldier as saying, “I don’t want to go home again, ever. . . . How can I leave these people who have treated me so swell . . . like a man, not like some damn animal?”\(^9\) It is indeed understandable, if not natural, Smith suggests in his article, that black GIs hate the idea of going home, where they will be greeted not by cheerful crowds but by

\(^8\) Maria Höhn’s *GI**s and Fräuleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany* offers a particularly lucid account of the German-American encounters in postwar-Germany.

segregated buses and restaurants, and by Jim Crow legislation. The implicit threat, in his article, is the abandonment of “the land of the free” under public protest—for all the world to see.

It is no wonder, then, that in *Last of the Conquerors*, Smith’s first-person narrator Dawkins wants to continue living in Germany. Nor is it surprising when, failing at that, he is determined to come back as soon as he is discharged in the U.S. In a sense, he is de-racialized in German society, where his primary social identity is national; he interacts with others and is treated as, first and foremost, an American occupation soldier. It is in the context of occupied Germany—and the fact that it is occupied Germany is, as we will see, crucial—that Dawkins finally learns that he can act outside of the limits that his home society has prescribed for him, that he is an agent who can reject certain well-entrenched beliefs and embrace other, new ones. The new and different definitions of central Western values—such as freedom, equality, and dignity—that he is exposed to as a result of his displacement allow him to re-code these values for himself. As a result, he become conscious of new possible ways of thinking and feeling. And he clearly enjoys this experience of agency. Like many of his friends, Dawkins does not want to give up his newly acquired equality, and his openly lived interracial relationship with a white woman—the specter of miscegenation that haunts American society—is the token of this equality. This is certainly one reason why Dawkins is so pleased at spending time with his girlfriend’s family.

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10 One might even say that this is a reversal of the two-ness W.E.B. DuBois described, a subsuming of that (partially forced) identity that is African beneath the identity that is American.
and relatives, who not only deeply respect him, but actually like him, very much
approving his relationship with her.

But this relationship is important to Dawkins for more than just what it sym-
bolizes. It is a real relationship, with genuine feeling and, yes, love. Like all of Smith’s
heroes, Dawkins, while in certain ways a “tough guy,” is likely to surprise us on the
topic of intersubjective relationships in general and his love relationship in particular.
When we begin to read about the love affair between Dawkins and Ilse, we somehow
expect the young black GI to take advantage of the naïve German girl—perhaps
because we have read too much Richard Wright to expect otherwise. Learning that
Smith grew up fighting his way out of the South Philadelphia ghetto, we are probably
even more inclined to expect exploitation and objectification in his treatment of the
German lover. But, as I have mentioned before, Smith’s heroes are different from
Wright’s. In vain do we look for misogynist or misanthropic traits as we find them in
Bigger Thomas, Cross Damon and Fishbelly. Smith’s Dawkins is as seriously in love
with Ilse as she is with him; he is tender, warm to and protective of his German girl-
friend. His sensitivity is not, however, restricted to this love relationship to Ilse. He is
kind and compassionate as well with her family members and proves an excellent
friend to those of his fellow GIs whom he has taken to his heart. He relishes the har-
mony that he finds in post-war Germany, insofar as the coexistence of people of
different nationalities, races and ethnicities is concerned.

Dawkins is thus a perfect example of Smith’s predilection for sensitive heroes.
Like all of them, he thinks a lot about philosophical questions and about the state of
the world. Like all of them, he longs for peace, love, and harmony. And like all them, he gets himself into trouble with his sensitivity. Sensitive men, Smith emphasizes over and over again, can be hurt more easily by their adversaries, especially sensitive black men. And the adversaries in *Last of the Conquerors*, those who stand in the way of overtly lived love relationships between white German women and black GIs like Hawkins, are exclusively white GIs.

After a few happy months with Ilse in Berlin, Dawkins is transferred to an all-black unit in southern Germany, evocatively nicknamed ‘nigger hell’ among the soldiers. He is now under the command of a diabolical duo, the black first sergeant, Brink, and the white commanding officer, Captain Polke, who, as Smith biographer LeRoy Hodges notes, “run the company like a plantation in days of slavery: Polke the slave master, and Brink the ‘head-nigger-in-charge’” (Hodges 14).  

From here on, Smith’s novel presents a disturbing yet historically accurate picture of the everyday life of a black soldier in the segregated occupation army, showing Dawkins’ love for Ilse and his friendship with other black soldiers to be not only his greatest assets but also his biggest liabilities in such atrocious surroundings.

The most heated racial animosities between black and white GIs—in historical reality as well as in Smith’s novel—centered on interracial dating. This is why, when

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11 So far, Hodges’s 1985 biography of Smith (springing from his dissertation, directed by Fabre), is the only book-length treatment of Smith’s work. Unfortunately, Hodges died shortly after its publication, and did not have a chance to return in later years and offer a more critically driven reading, as he might otherwise have done.

12 The fact that Smith’s portrait of segregation in the American occupation forces is of journalistic accuracy has been stressed by both Smith’s contemporaries and later critics; see, for example Carl Milton Hughes (99-101) or LeRoy Hodges (14). Leon C. Standifer gives a first-hand account of the life of black GIs in southern Germany in his memoir *Binding Up the Wounds: An American Soldier in Occupied Germany, 1945-1946*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997, and his observations correlate closely with Smith’s accounts in both fictional and non-fiction texts.
Dawkins starts his service in the all-black company, he is warned on the first day by a fellow soldier to be careful, since “[Captain] Polke sure hates to see one of the boys with a white girl” (LoC 138). Indeed, “sexual competition between white and black troops over German women,” as historian Heide Fehrenbach attests, intensified already existing hostilities between black and white GIs in Germany (2005, 44). Fraternization of black GIs and white German women was likely to have serious consequences, not only for the GIs, but also for their girlfriends. Hauling German women into custody for venereal disease checks was a particular popular way for the American military police to punish German women for dating or socializing with black GIs. In Smith’s novel, Ilse is kept in custody for two full days for such a check, during which she is repeatedly assaulted and informed that “the colored man was dirty and very poor and had much sickness” (LoC 196). Finally, the MPs let Ilse go, after forcing her to promise that she will not see her black lover again. It is a promise, of course, that she has no intention of keeping.

What Smith does not mention in this context, however, is that German authorities would regularly cooperate with American MPs to regulate the behaviour of German women, and that these local authorities were all too eager to assist. Fehrenbach maintains that “fraternization between black GIs and white German women . . . became the central problem of the occupation, since [it] was treated as an unbearable provocation by numerous white American soldiers and officers and by white German men” (45, my emphasis). If women like Ilse were called ‘nigger lovers’ by white Americans, the German population had a name for them too. They were not only Ami-
Huren (American whores), but Negerhuren (nigger whores), suggesting that only the lowest forms of white femininity – namely, prostitutes or the pathologically promiscuous – would be willing to associate with black men. While it is certainly true that of all occupation soldiers, black GIs were the favorites of the German population, this enthusiasm went only so far. The line was clearly drawn at possession of the German woman, perhaps partially in response to the loss of social and sexual privilege that was one of the most shocking aspects of defeat and occupation for German men. If white patriarchal privilege had been fundamentally challenged by the somewhat premature end of the ‘Thousand-Year Reich,’ and by the significant empowerment and liberation of German women during the war, it seemed quite positively threatened by foreign multiracial troops who, as occupiers, were not only in a position of power, but also made exclusive claims to the bodies of these women (Fehrenbach 41). More threatening still, perhaps, was the fact that the German women wanted to be with these foreign and outlandish men, a dilemma portrayed in Rainer Werner Fassbinder’s renowned film Die Ehe der Maria Braun (1979).

Smith’s consistent depiction of postwar Germany as a racial paradise for American blacks becomes thus questionable when we confront it with historical accounts.

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13 Fassbinder’s film (the English title is The Marriage of Maria Braun), tells the story of the German woman Maria Braun, who, believing that her husband has been killed in the war, begins a relationship with a black GI. When her husband unexpectedly returns and finds her and the African American in bed, he loses his temper and during the ensuing fight, Maria hits the soldier over the head with a bottle and kills him. Her husband takes blame for the crime and goes to prison, and Maria herself gives birth soon after to a stillborn baby fathered by the GI. After meeting a French businessman, Maria makes a career for herself as his assistant and lover, not knowing that he has visited her husband in prison and struck a deal with him to stay away from his wife until after his death. The film ends with a great explosion on the day that Maria’s husband finally returns to her, because she has accidentally left the gas unlit. Famous for its adequate and sensitive depiction of postwar conditions in Germany, Fassbinder’s film shows the peculiar relationship between German women and American GIs of the occupation army to be one that ranges from mutual attraction to considerations of practicability and survival.
which show that German attitudes toward black Americans had a tendency to shift significantly with proximity. We find similar statements in accounts of black Germans, such as, for example, Ika Hügel-Marshall’s *Daheim Unterwegs: Ein Deutsches Leben* (1998).\(^{14}\) Reaching back to the story of her parents, a German mother and a black GI father, Hügel-Marshall remembers that in 1946 – exactly the year of Smith’s duty – the Germans “called [my father] nigger and my mother nigger whore. Black bastard was the phrase for the likes of me” (14-5). German racism towards non-whites and non-Germans, it turns out, had not magically disappeared after WWII. The question is why such racism is not represented in Smith’s novel, which otherwise goes to pains to adequately depict the historical situation. The cosmopolitan dimension of Smith’s critique of racism seems, after all, compromised by this significant blind spot.

We could attribute the discrepancies in the representation of postwar German attitudes towards blacks simply to Smith’s naïveté; after all, he was only 20 when he wrote his first novel. Much research has been conducted on African American writers and artists’ tendency after World Wars I and II to imagine Europe—somewhat limit-edly—as a safe haven devoid of racism,\(^{15}\) and Smith certainly seems to fit the trend here. This attitude might at first seem to correspond to a phenomenon that Salman

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\(^{14}\) The English title of Hügel-Marshall’s book, *Invisible Woman*, seems an interesting choice, not only because of its play on Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, but also because it seems to contradict moments like the following in Hügel-Marshall’s text: “[N]o matter what I do to blend in, I cannot conceal my blackness... . . . I cannot avoid being hurt. I’m still visible” (50, my emphasis). At a reading at the University of California, San Diego, Hügel-Marshall declared that she is not happy with Continuum’s title choice and would have much preferred a more direct translation of the German title. This would mean something along the lines of *At Home on the Road: a German Life*. All quotes here are taken from the English translation.

\(^{15}\) The problems that resulted from the tendency in African Americans to romanticize Europe as a racism-free, egalitarian space are well laid out, for example in Michel Fabre, *From Harlem to Paris* (1992), and in James Campbell, *Exiled in Paris: Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Samuel Beckett, and Others on the Left Bank* (1993).
Rushdie has called “the mighty conflict between the fantasy of home and the fantasy
of away.”\textsuperscript{16} The ‘fantasy of home,’ for Rushdie, embodies “the dream of roots, the
yearning for an idealized lost home,” while the ‘fantasy of away’ represents “the
mirage of the journey, the lure of the road.”\textsuperscript{17} Rushdie describes an experience com-
mon to all human beings: the location we \textit{are not in} at any given moment—be it the
remembered home or the imagined away—inevitably becomes a fantasy, a fiction that
does not fully correspond to the reality of the actually existing place. On this view, one
could assume that Smith might have fantasized about a racism-free “away” in
Germany before his departure for Europe. If he should have been prone to such a fan-
tasy of a racism-free “away,” however—and he writes that he was not—one would
expect it to have been shattered irrevocably by his confrontation with “the real thing.”
Such a confrontation constitutes, after all, in itself exactly the kind of clash of ideo-
logies that Paul Smith understands as the origin of discernment and agency. The real
question remains the following: How could W.G. Smith on the one hand make use of
clashes in his own ideological conditioning to critique American racism, but at the
same time retain a blind spot towards German racism?

There is a second explanation that comes easily in responding to these ques-
tions, and this certainly moves us in a more satisfying direction. Besides being a nove-
list, Smith was also, as I mentioned above, a journalist in Germany for the influential

\textsuperscript{16} Rushdie in an interview for \textit{Princeton Report on Knowledge}. “I am not very interested in respect.” in
\textit{P-Rok: Princeton Report on Knowledge} vol.1, No.1, online edition, http://prok.princeton.edu/1-
1/interview

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
African American periodical *Pittsburgh Courier*. Despite his youth, he had an acute political awareness and agenda, writing, as his biographer LeRoy Hodges puts it, “well beyond his age” (17). *Last of the Conquerors* was, like Smith’s articles for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, written for an American audience. There are thus good grounds for assuming that Smith ignored or omitted moments of German racism deliberately, in order to reinforce the contrast between a black man’s life in Germany—where he could walk into every restaurant and with a companion of any skin color—and in the segregated United States. This contrast, and its implications for the lives of black GIs, is, after all, at the heart of the book.

Deliberate political intentions, however, seem unlikely to fully explain Smith’s omission of German racism in his first novel. Precisely because of his commitment, here and elsewhere, to presenting a full vision of the world, the fullness that closely attends sensitivity itself, we must look somewhat further. I want to suggest that we come closer to understanding this phenomenon if we complement the Rushdiean notion of the “fantasy of away” with Slavoj Žižek’s concept of the *ugly Real*. In his mockingly titled essay on the problem of racism, “Love Thy Neighbor? No, Thanks!”, Žižek contends that the ugly and out-of-place is the excess of existence over representation. In Lacanian fashion, Žižek differentiates between “the subject’s everyday symbolic universe” – its fantasized *reality* – and “its fantasmatic support” (161) – the

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18 Smith wrote a number of articles for the *Pittsburgh Courier* that were highly critical of the treatment of African Americans in the U.S. occupation army and praised the friendliness of German attitudes towards black GIs. Good examples of such articles include “Found Freedom in Germany: Few GI’s Eager to Return to States.” 22 February 1947: 1, 4; and “Keeping the Peace: American Prejudice Rampant in Germany.” 1 March 1947: 13.

19 Jerry H. Bryant suggests reading Smith’s novel “as part of the literature of black social protest begun by Richard Wright” (2).
Real. The Real, according to Žižek, is always ugly, and its forceful intrusion into what we fantasize as our reality, our symbolic universe, is always traumatic. For travelers, expatriates and cosmopolitans – as well as homebodies – the experienced realities of both home and away are thus always fictional to some degree, always a fantasy, regardless of the location of the interpreting subject and their familiarity with the place. Consequently, W.G. Smith might have faithfully conveyed much of the perceived reality of his situation, while still excluding important elements of the German Real, elements he perceived, without consciously seeing, as ugly in the Žižekian sense.

On this view, Smith’s denial of German racism towards blacks appears as a psychological blind spot, springing perhaps partly from political motivation but certainly also, and much more fundamentally, from psychological needs. Smith’s vision of post-war Germany as a racism-free space and his hope for a cosmopolitan utopia might have crucially depended on this exclusion of the nasty Real of German anti-black racism. If we believe that his emerging cosmopolitan vision was made possible through the clashing of American and post-war German ideological contexts, which opened up a space for agency in his experience of the world, we must also acknowledge that in this moment of conflict he worked with an idealized version of the German ideological context. Paul Gilroy’s assertion in Against Race, that Dawkins and other black GIs in Last of the Conquerors gradually evolve “toward a more complex

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20 We can observe this blindness and idealization in several moments in the novel. When, for example, Dawkins and Ilse sit opposite an “old German woman” in the Berliner Strassenbahn, the woman indignantly “glares” at Ilse and then at him. Dawkins assumes that “the woman does not approve of soldiers,” but draws no further conclusions (LoC 63). A racist background for the woman’s disapproval is not even considered. While German sensitivities to anti-Semitic statements, all of which are uttered in the novel by American soldiers, are well captured in the uneasiness and ambiguous silence they produce, ongoing German racism towards blacks is completely eclipsed.
and disturbing position that sees antiblack racism as fundamentally linked to anti-Semitism” (309), thus seems slightly oversimplified, despite Gilroy’s otherwise excellent analysis of the novel. While it is indeed the case in the novel, as Gilroy claims, that “the pregenocidal aggression of the Germans toward the Jews is repeatedly compared to the Jim Crow system” (Gilroy 313), contemporary German racism towards blacks is never mentioned, let alone related to their past anti-Semitism. If German anti-black racism is addressed at all, it is done exclusively through references to the past, mainly through the mention of Hitler’s commentaries on blacks. One such moment occurs when Dawkins’s fellow GI Randy, who has fought the Germans during the war gets angry at his comrades’ naïveté: “You guys which ain’t seen no action come over here and let these [white] women make a fool out of you. . . . Dumb niggers. You ought never forget what Hitler said about you in Mein Kampf. These people ain’t changing overnight” (LoC 12).

But in Last of the Conquerors, they seem to have done so. While the African American men may be racialized in aesthetic ways by German women—Ilse makes repeated remarks about the beauty of Dawkins’ dark skin and kinky hair—these remarks are always meant and taken as compliments. As such, they are contrasted with white American notions of the “ugliness” of the exact same features, and presented as

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21 Another such moment occurs after a German Ex-POW, who was imprisoned in the U.S., comments on the discrimination against African Americans there, asserting that America would need “a Hitler. . . . Someone who is strong enough to make sure everyone is treated alike. Hitler would have made sure” (LoC 57). Dawkins reacts to this would-be friendly suggestion with weary sarcasm:
“Like he did with the Jews?”
“He would not have done it to the Negroes.”
“Did you read Mein Kampf?”
“No,” he said.
“You should. You’d find out what he thinks of the Negroes.” (LoC 57)
innocent and honest appreciation of beauty rather than as moments of racism or objectification – as they are, for example, in Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (1953), with regards to white American women. And hostile, racist attacks from German women or men against African Americans never occur in the novel at all, presenting the prototype of the racist white American as the *sole* enemy of black GIs. This enemy—in his many incarnations—causes not only a tragic gunfight, but also forces Dawkins’s premature return to America at the end of the novel, forcing him to leave a devastated Ilse behind.

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22 Another interesting example in this context is Nella Larsen’s first (and at least partly autobiographical) novel *Quicksand* (1928). Helga Crane, a fictional version of Larsen herself, is the light-skinned daughter of a white Danish mother and a black father, who goes to various places and communities in search of a place where she feels she belongs. Her travels bring her to Copenhagen, where she at first seems to encounter a racism-free society that admires her beauty, but soon finds out that she is only exoticized and thus objectified and racialized within the predominantly white Danish society.

23 Ilse shares her fate with countless (historical) German women whose American boyfriends were, more or less unexpectedly, gone one day. Those who were, like Ika Hügel-Marshall’s mother, expecting a child when their black boyfriends were on their way back to the States were now all the more confronted with the highly problematic German attitude towards interracial relationships and their mixed-race offspring. If the mothers were called Negerhuren, their children were labeled *Negermischlinge*—“Negro- or Nigger-half-breeds.” As “black bastards,” to use Hügel-Marshall’s term, these children were destined, from the moment of their birth, to lead a life marked by racism and isolation. German officials, however, knew all too well that openly displayed racism of any variety would not be tolerated by the world public only a few years after the Holocaust. Thus, they generally refrained from overtly discriminating against the children, and instead castigated the mothers. If they had been “nigger-whores” first, they were now publicly depicted as *Unmutter*, un-mothers: unstable personalities who were unable or unwilling to care for their children, and who regularly opted to institutionalize rather than nurture them. The truth, however, is that institutionalization was one of the favorite official “solutions” to the “problem,” as it was seen by postwar German officials. While initially preferring the idea of international adoption, preferably to black America, they quickly came to see internal solutions as somewhat more feasible, either by placing children in segregated orphanages, where they could be “carefully educated with an eye to their future emigration,” or in integrated orphanages, where these mixed-race children would learn to cope with what were called “life’s struggles” from an early age (Fehrenbach 2). Officially, all this was done in the best interests of those poor innocent children, who, as a result of their mothers’ irresponsible behavior, were bound to suffer severe emotional damage growing up in all-white communities. We find such a mixed-race child in *Last of the Conquerors* as well. Sonny, as he is called, is “a small Negro boy about three years old” and “extremely handsome” (*LoC* 63). Dawkins is immediately drawn to the boy, who, as he learns, is the son of a U.S. soldier and a German girl. The polite, cheerful little boy in Smith’s novel has been orphaned by his parents, who, as Ilse explains, felt unable to take care of him. Sonny has not been institutionalized, however; in this case, “Frau Hoffman [a white German woman] took the baby” (*LoC* 64). As Ilse explains, “he thinks Frau Hoffman is his mother” (*LoC* 64). In contrast to the institutionalized life and painful isolation that we
As mentioned earlier, it is very possible that Smith *purposely* excluded aspects of German racism from his writings for political reasons. But even if this was the case, his personal and political commitments did, at this point of his cosmopolitan development, not necessarily free him from developing blind spots with regards to German racism. Rather, such commitments might have deepened his psychological need to exclude the ugliness of German anti-black racism from his symbolic universe. The young writer, one could speculate, was so affected by the experience of relative racial equality, so eager to make use of the agency that sprang from this conflict of ideologies, and so excited about indicting the ugliness of the American Real, that the ugliness of the German Real became, in a way, secondary to him. The near-total absence of German racism towards blacks is of such a crucial importance for the novel—as it is for Smith’s journalism of the time—that the intrusion of a racist Real would not only threaten his political project, but quite likely also his nascent cosmopolitan dream, the mirage of a place were black people are indeed treated as full equals, where race, finally, becomes meaningless. Georg Schmundt-Thomas has, for this reason, spoken of an “African American utopia” that Smith constructs in *Last of the Conquerors*, describing Germany “not as the dark opposite of America, but rather take[ing] the foreign culture as a model for positive change in racial relations at home” (74).

While I in many ways agree with Schmundt-Thomas’s statement, I believe that Smith find, for example, in Hügel-Marshall’s autobiographical account, Sonny’s life is filled, as we learn, with many white friends and he “goes to everyone’s house and they give him to eat” (*LoC* 65). If Sonny’s should in fact be a very tragic story, it is hardly recognizable as such in the novel, since the little boy is obviously very happy in his big white community of surrogate parents, and admired for his beauty and sweetness wherever he goes. We can only assume that he is bound to have a rather bad awakening once he comes to understand the processes of racialization and racial difference – the Real – that sustain the reality of white community.
aimed at more than constructing a specifically African American utopia. And this is exactly where we find the budding cosmopolitanism that Paul Gilroy sees in the novel.

When in the novel Dawkins lies next to Ilse on the Wannsee beach, he is surprised how “here, away from the thought of differences for a while, it was odd how quickly I forgot it. It had lost importance. Everyone was blue or green or red.” Peoples’ skins are contrasting, but Dawkins notes that “our hearts [are] beating together, and [we all have] . . . noses in the center of our faces” (LoC 27). This assurance of and hope for a transracial humanity goes beyond the building of an African American utopia, and is indeed, as per Gilroy, Smith’s first movement towards the transracial, cosmopolitan vision that he developed in his later writings, especially in *The Stone Face*. Dawkins is Smith’s mouthpiece here, expressing his own thoughts about the true nature of humanity, about the equality and sameness that lie underneath all constructed and cultivated fantasies of difference. His love to Ilse and her love to him are feeding and furthering this thought process on cosmopolitan egalitarianism. When Ilse first shows interest in him, Dawkins believes that it is for purely pragmatic reasons (money, food, cigarettes), and he is consequently on his guard with respect to his own emotions. When he later realizes that Ilse indeed loves him as a man and human being, and that she is even willing to make sacrifices for him, he is deeply touched and opens up to her, allowing this new kind of love to happen. This emotional openness, and the powerful, positive experiences that result from it, in turn lead to a new understanding of the nature of interracial relationships and, by extension, of human relationships in general. Dawkins is thus—like Smith himself—a young cosmopolitan thinker
who grasps the truth of human equality with both his thoughts and feelings. As a result, he actively changes his thinking as well as his emotional attachments.

At the end of the novel, it is this combination of his emotions and his thinking that gets Dawkins into trouble. Although he has been warned from the beginning that missing bed-check is regularly used as a pretense to punish black GIs for fraternization with German women, he ignores the warning, and ends up being ostentatiously punished for just that offense. The real issue at hand, however, is his knowledge of a (historical) fraud in the U.S. Army, the goal of which was to have one-third of the black GIs dishonorably discharged. When Dawkins’s friend Stevenson runs amok after being court-martialed for his refusal to participate in the fraud, and kills the Sergeant of the company, Dawkins starts the motor of an army truck for him, and Stevenson manages to escape. After the following inquiry, Captain Polke tries first to bribe Dawkins – who knows too much of the whole dirty affair to stay in the company – with a scholarship at an American college, and then threatens him with a court-martial over his missed bed-checks. Faced with the options of being either court-martialed or honorably discharged from the Army, Dawkins chooses the latter. When asked by a fellow soldier if he is returning to the States, Dawkins affirms that he is, and the soldier answers “tough” (262). This is the very last word of the novel, leaving further thoughts to the reader.

Dawkins’s sensitivity, his emotional involvement with Ilse and with his friend Stevenson, is what, in the end, provokes his forced choice between court-martial and the return to the Philadelphia ghetto. It is worth emphasizing that Smith did not give

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24 Smith also wrote about this scandal in the U.S. Army as a journalist for the Pittsburg Courier.
his main protagonist the part of heroic resistance against the unjust American system, which is instead taken by Dawkins’s friend Stevenson. Dawkins’s own move—the preparation of the getaway car for Stevenson—is by comparison much less spectacular, as Dawkins himself is, like all of Smith’s heroes, a much less spectacular and less violent person. His final decision to be bribed by Polke rather than facing court-martial, is, as LeRoy Hodges has pointed out, a particularly non-heroic move, one that could even be understood as “a flaw in Dawkins’s character” (Hodges 16). It is, however, one that is in keeping with the flaws of Smith’s other sensitive heroes. Like them, Dawkins is a sensitive intellectual rather than a fighter, someone who reflects and thinks about what he learns and experiences, rather than acting blindly and/or violently. But he is also a man in touch with his emotions, and his first-person narration is thus thought-provoking and emotionally engaging at the same time, even if he does not heroically but futilely stand up to fight in the end. This is perhaps why Carl Van Vechten wrote in a 1948 letter to Smith’s publisher John Farrar, “It’s been a long time since I have read a more arresting and moving book than Last of the Conquerors. . . . [Smith is] a remarkable new writer, with remarkable skill, charm, and power.”

The literary quality and emotional power of the novel have been evaluated differently over time. While more recent critics tend to standpoints similar to that of Paul Gilroy, who observes that Smith’s work is interesting “not because his novels manifest the greatest literary qualities but because, with an exemplary bravery, they dare to ap-

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25 Van Vechten to Farrar, October 12, 1948. Van Vechten was in fact so exited about Smith’s work that he expressed his desire to photograph him for the James Weldon Johnson Collection of Negro Arts and Letters, which he did a few months later in New York. Van Vechten’s photographs of Smith are part of the James Weldon Johnson Collection in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University.
proach complex and important questions” (Gilroy 308), Smith’s contemporaries were often much more celebratory in their evaluation. 26 What is certain, however, is that the novel is an arresting and important treatment not only of a sad piece of American history, but also of the critical cosmopolitan theme. It is in a strange and foreign land that Smith's protagonists learn their crucial lesson about life at home. Back in the U.S., Smith makes clear, these men would never have found out about the full scope of their mistreatment. While the disenfranchisement and discrimination was blatant enough, it was still too naturalized to be experienced in its full extent. Spatial and cultural displacement—and the conflict of ideologies that come with such displacement—is thus a necessary prerequisite for cognizance in Last of the Conquerors. And the emotional impact that the realization of these conflicts produces leads to the passionate affirmation of human sameness and equality that we find again and again in the novel. The book’s eclipsing of German racism towards blacks makes for a more blatant contrast with American social circumstances and thus perhaps heightens its political force, but from the viewpoint of cosmopolitanism it is a weakness I would want to ascribe to Smith’s youth and to the early stage of his own cosmopolitanism. As we will see in the following, he became less and less dependent for his critique on the construction of ideal counter-worlds. Especially in The Stone Face, he deliberately allowed the ugly Real of, in that case, the French (and by extension the world’s) social order to come closer and to present itself in its full ugliness. Before turning to what is perhaps

26 Jack Conroy sounds less enthusiastic than Van Vechten, but still approves of the novel, when he stresses in a 1948 review for the Chicago Sun Times that Smith’s writing is “for the most part . . . strong, simple, and lively,” and literary critic Carl Milton Hughes even writes in his 1953 The Negro Novelist that “Last of the Conquerors is outstanding for the quality of its style” (Hughes 102).
Smith’s most extraordinary book, however, I want to offer at least a few brief thoughts on Smith’s other two published novels, *Anger at Innocence* and *South Street*, and to their overall place in Smith’s cosmopolitan development.

**Tales of American Anti-Cosmopolitanism: *Anger at Innocence* and *South Street***

Set in the author’s native Philadelphia, Smith’s second novel, *Anger at Innocence*, is an expression of his general unwillingness to be pigeonholed within a social or political identity. His correspondence with Farrar, Straus, and Young at the time makes quite clear that he was not willing to be labeled, after the success of *Last of the Conquerors*, as a “black protest writer.” In a 1949 letter to the publisher’s marketing specialist Carolyn Wolfe, he explains that he

> did not originally plan to write novels directly about Negroes; for this would reach only a certain, limited audience. I planned, rather, to write stories about white people, bringing in the racial theme only indirectly. My overseas experience changed my mind, so that my first novel is about Negroes. Most of the others I write will follow the original plan.²⁷

Given this professed intention and Smith’s notorious stubbornness, it is not surprising that his second novel presents exactly that: a story “about white people, bringing in the [African American] racial theme only indirectly.” In a letter to John Farrar, Smith explains that *Anger at Innocence* tells a story “which fascinates me. . . . Its theme, to me, is wider than the story itself, for it concerns the twisting effects of racial hatred . . . the frustrations of a man who finally turns to brute strength . . . the almost universal dream

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of complete happiness . . . and the effects of conscience, of guilt.”

Clearly, Smith attempted to write a story about universal human values and problems, and he could easily have, as Wright did on the jacket of *The Outsider*, attested that his characters could have been “of any race.” He kept re-telling this story that “fascinated” him, in a way, for the rest of his life. The problem of sensitivity, the effects of racial hatred, the turn to brute strength, the dream of peace and happiness, the tormenting effects of guilt—these are the themes that dominate all of Smith’s books.

The fact that Smith did—even before his trip to Germany—not want “to write directly about Negroes” and racial themes, but hoped rather to speak to the concerns of all human beings, indicates that he was inclined towards cosmopolitan values from a very young age. He himself would probably have explained this tendency with reference to both his own sensitivity and his urge to get out of the box that America had prepared for him. Sensitivity, Smith insisted as an adult, could be a curse for a black man in racist America, and much of his life, both at home and abroad, involved negotiating the benefits and downsides of this defining trait. In *Anger at Innocence*, he goes to extremes, showing us what happens to a man who acts out his sensitivity without reserve, despite living in a society without mercy. In the story of the thin-skinned night watchman Theodore and the abusive relationships he finds himself in, Smith probes the limits of sensitivity, concluding that in an unlimited and uncontrolled

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29 In the introduction to the unpublished “Black Mail: The Letters of William Gardner Smith,” LeRoy Hodges quotes an acquaintance of Smith as stating that “the young Bill Smith was a shy, sensitive person who strove to overcome the poverty and illegitimacy of his birth and to overcompensate for them” (3). For my access to Hodges’s manuscript, I am indebted to Michel Fabre, who was kind enough to let me do research in his private collection in Paris. Smith’s mother was never married to his father, and Smith grew up instead with a stepfather and three half-siblings.
fashion this human quality is not only dangerous but potentially fatal. All major characters in the novel are white and number among the working poor, and have thus not seen much more of the American dream than the average African American. The racial theme in the story is addressed through the figure of Juarez, a dark-skinned Mexican immigrant who struggles with his racialized status in U.S. society and fights desperately to be accepted as a white American male.

The innocence of the novel’s title, interestingly, is not a quality of the young girl Rodina. Rather, it is the much older Theodore who is kind and generous to a fault, almost incapable of answering aggression or wrongdoing with anything but compassion. Rodina, on the other hand, together with her ex-boyfriend Hucks and her ever-complaining mother, stands for anger and violence in the novel. It is Rodina who causes trouble, and Theodore who tries to fix or excuse things. Likewise, his wife Sylvia mocks him constantly, calling him a coward and provoking him with passive-aggressive statements such as “you’d probably have done much better . . . marrying someone else” (13), while at the same time expecting him to convince her again and again of the opposite. Theodore, we understand quickly, is too nice, too sensitive for life in the American ghetto, and his sensitivity brings him nothing but mockery and contempt: “So sensitive,” thinks his wife with spite, “so afraid he’ll hurt my feelings. So protective. The brave, shielding husband” (12). The acidic sarcasm that Sylvia here targets at her husband deliberately distorts what in fact are positive qualities of his. His urge to protect and shield others shows that his sensitivity is combined with courage and a sense of responsibility, which should actually count in his favour. But Sylvia
turns it against him, taking it as a sign of weakness, if not stupidity. We can only suppose that what drives her to do so is a kind of “anger at innocence” that results from her own guilt and a sense of inferiority in the face of the generosity and kindness of her husband.

As always in Smith’s novels, the sensitivity of the protagonist is thus a double-edged sword. While it is what distinguishes Theo, what makes him a poet at heart and a kind and caring human being, it also makes him unfit for life in the United States; and it makes him the helpless target of other people’s hatred and cruelty. For Smith’s sensitive heroes, the brutality of the world—a brutality that includes but cannot be reduced to the crimes that spring from racism—is a force that terrorizes them existentially. They all struggle with extreme versions of the problem of the unwilling or hostile conversation partner in the hermeneutic situation, holding ‘conversations’ that threaten to cancel their very beings. Gadamer’s good-willed intercultural conversations, after all, rely on the assumption that the opponent is good-willed, too. This, however, is clearly not always the case. Thus, while Gadamer suggests strengthening the Other “against oneself” (2000, 284) in intercultural and other conversations—and I have shown in chapter 1 the way this helps build cosmopolitan understanding—affirming its benefits cannot eliminate the real risk that, if the Other actually plans to hurt or destroy you, such strengthening might prove fatal.30

30 Gadamer’s belief in the good-willed conversation partner perhaps springs from his development of the theory in hermeneutical conversations with books – the statements of people who want to be understood, even when they are hostile. Perhaps, however, the truest difficulty is to be found in a conversation where one’s other doesn’t want to be understood.
This is clearly the case for Theo. In his interactions with both his wife and Rodina, he tends to overly strengthen the position of these Others against himself. As a result, he loses his job and later even agrees to steal from his new work place in order to pay for Rodina’s mother's bills. Eventually, however, he has to realize that Rodina is betraying him. Not only does she sleep with her ex-boyfriend, she also has asked Theo to steal for the sole purpose of making him less morally good and more like herself: rotten and unstable. Theo’s sensitive nature cannot bear this harsh realization and, in the end, Rodina finds him with a gun in his hand, thinking about suicide.

Rodina’s guilt for treating this kind man so badly has, in turn, become so overwhelming that she tries to provoke Theo into killing her instead of himself. But he tosses the gun on the bed, from whence she eventually picks it up to shoot him. In the same night, Juarez commits suicide because he can no longer bear the racist hostility he experiences because of his “dark skin, thick features, and shiny straight black hair” (24). These simultaneous deaths seem to suggest the impossibility to communicate with or change a world for the better if that world is not willing or able to engage in any good-willed interaction: a central dilemma of the sensitive human being.

Unfortunately, Anger at Innocence is an underdeveloped book that would have much profited from further revision (which Smith was unwilling to do). Still, the novel is important in the context of Smith’s cosmopolitan development, not only because he attempts to write about topics that are all-inclusive and universal, but, because he points to one of the major problems of the emotionally engaged, cosmopolitan writer.
politan-in-process: how can one be sensitive, compassionate and cosmopolitan in non-compassionate, non-cosmopolitan surroundings? Writing hard on the heels of his return from Germany, Smith uses U.S. society as a prime example of such an environment, showing how it produces row upon row of angry, desperate, insensitive and even insensate subjects. Theo is a man who does not understand that, in such an environment, his unabashed sensitivity and the resulting compassion and care for others is nothing but a danger to himself. That Smith allows this to destroy him suggests a desire to demonstrate the validity of his own assertion that sensitivity is—in the wrong environment—a curse for not only the black man but any man. As long as the world is the way it is, particularly but not only in the U.S., he seems to suggest, the sensitive man must engage in some self-shielding and self-saving if he wants to survive. What possible strategies might be available for such shielding and saving, Smith seems to have worked out in his next novel, *South Street* (1954).

In *South Street*, Smith thus continues his thinking about how to deal with a society that does not reward sensitivity or cosmopolitan attitudes. In sharp contrast to *Anger at Innocence*, *South Street* features a nearly all-black cast, with only one white character of importance, but it is again set in Smith’s native Philadelphia. The novel centers on three African American brothers who have developed very different philosophies in dealing with American society. Michael is, as LeRoy Hodges notes, something like an “early version of the late Malcolm X” (44), while the hyper-sensitive Philip is diffident and pacifist. Claude, the third brother, is somewhere in between. He is the critical intellectual of the family and, although he has been “in Africa for two
years, fighting . . . for Africa’s freedom” (17), prefers reflection to thoughtless violence.

As so often in Smith’s books, the story builds a tension between interracial love and racial violence, and the love relationship—in this case between Claude and the white violin player Kristin—is deeply damaged by the racial hatred that surrounds it. But it is not only Claude’s relationship that is affected by its hostile environment; his very existence and his most basic values are threatened, too. Because Claude had wanted, and still wanted, to live not as a Negro, but as a man. His skin was brown—that pleased him well enough, but he wanted to live a life in which that would have little more importance than the color of one’s hair. A human being—emotionally, spiritually and intellectually—had range. . . . Poverty, afflictions, the ordinary human lot—let these come, they were nothing, they were part of the universal human experience. It was the universal human experience that he sought. (244).

In Claude’s seeking of the “the universal human experience,” we recognize a deep yearning for a life uninhibited by race-thinking. Claude does not, in fact, shy away from human pain and problems; rather, he wants to explore the “range” of human being to its fullest extent and without being restricted by other people’s stereotyping and discriminating. This is a decidedly cosmopolitan yearning, and the fact that, in Claude’s eyes, the human range consists of emotions, spirituality and intellect alike suggests that he sees the universal human experience as lived out through these different but interconnected meaning-making faculties that are shared by all human beings. Such a life experience, however, Claude has to accept at some point, is close to impossible in a society built on racism. Unlike Theo in Anger at Innocence, and unlike
his brother Philip, whose hyper-sensitivity gets him murdered in the end, Claude understands in time that he cannot make the particular historical situation of the United States fit his needs and that a change of scenery—in this case expatriation to Canada—is the only possible way out of his dilemma. Only in a less hostile, less racist, and more cosmopolitan environment will he and Kristin be able to live the kind of life that they want. Their interlocutors must at least be somewhat good-willed, somewhat tolerant, to make a life possible that even approaches Claude’s race-blind ideal.

This conclusion is in many ways congruent with the lessons Smith seems to have drawn in *Last of the Conquerors* and *Anger at Innocence*: a sensitive, cosmopolitan life is not possible in the United States, and those Americans—particularly those African Americans—who want to live it must leave their home country and go to other, more open-minded societies, be they in Europe or Canada. In *South Street*, however, Claude’s decision to leave the U.S., comes too late. At the end, his and his wife’s bags are packed for their departure to Montreal, but they will not go and their love will not survive.32 After his brother Philip’s death at the hands of racist fanatics, Claude feels compelled to stay in the U.S. and to settle for the rough life of a black man on Philadelphia’s notorious South Street. And while his decision could be interpreted as a heroic one, choosing “to stand up and fight” over flight and abandonment, the very last line of the novel, in which “the Blues Singer thr[ows] back her head” to sing the sad songs of African American suffering and sufferance, suggests

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32 Smith had intended *South Street* to be the first part of a trilogy, but not only did Farrar, Straus and Young turn down the second part, “Simeon,” as that manuscript was entitled, also got lost in mail on its way back to him; since Smith had not been able to afford a carbon copy, it was lost entirely. Unbelievably, almost the same thing happened to the completed third part of the trilogy, “The Gangsters,” which, like “Simeon,” disappeared somewhere en route between the publisher and the author.
otherwise. The Blues, is, after all, an expression not only of life under painful oppres-
sion, but also of acquiescence, and thus acceptance. Remaining in a racist society,
Smith seems to suggest at this point of his cosmopolitan development, makes open-
minded conversations and a freely lived life, impossible. The only way out is flight;
those who remain, will give up and comply.

It is perhaps not a coincidence that *South Street*, with its disheartening ending,
was written when Smith was already living abroad, having left the U.S. for good in the
summer of 1951. Living with his German lover Musy Hafner in Paris, he had become
more than a little disillusioned with life in the United States, and in a letter to his
mother wonders whether “there are any people left in the States,” since it seems to him
that everybody he knows is leaving. For this, he emphasizes, he does not blame
them.33 In Paris, he writes to his mother, he enjoys the company of “people with com-
mon interests from all over the world” and relishes the liberal and multihued atmos-
phere of the beautiful city.34 If he was to come home to the U.S. at all, Smith writes
in another letter, it certainly would have to be “a two-way trip,” since “when I think of
the states [*sic*], it seems to me that I’m thinking of a foreign country. Paris is more
familiar to me, it seems.”35 Smith, who had initially planned to go to Paris for only a
year, had at this point already put behind him the idea that he would ever return to the
U.S. From his perspective, the kind of life he wanted to live and the kind of man he
wanted to be were not possible there. The idea that one could fight one’s way force-
fully to a mutual engagement and respect with the abusive Other seemed absurd to

33 Smith to Edith Earle, February 21, 1953.
34 Smith to Edith Earle, October 20, 1953.
35 Smith to Edith Earle, June 17, 1955.
American society had provided the psychological strain that had “pushed him out”—as he put it in the Paris Review interview—catalyzing a cosmopolitan development that might have remained simply deep internal conflict had he not left. In Paris, he was free to meet and mingle with people from all ways of life, to marry a white French woman, and to work as a respected journalist for AFP, untroubled by the damaging forces of anti-black racism. As to the chances of living successfully as a black cosmopolitan within the U.S., however, Smith had little hope in 1954.

This attitude had begun to shift nine years later, in 1963, when he wrote his next and final novel, The Stone Face. With this novel, he casts a critical light on both American and French society, going beyond the blinkered celebration of a racism-free Europe that we find in Last of the Conquerors. Here, too, we find him pushing through and to the other side of the near-total hopelessness that is expressed in his 1950s work, toward a cautious belief in the possibility of meaningful interaction with even the determinedly closed Other. Transcending both utopian thinking and absolute pessimism, The Stone Face offers a more balanced, and much more critical, cosmopolitan gaze at the political situation in Europe (specifically France). This critical perspective emerges in large part through Smith's portrayal of the conflicted feelings of one successful American escapee when looking at the powerful struggle of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. The question here has shifted, from "Can anything be done?"

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36 “How did one fight to gain social acceptance?,” Smith has Claude ask himself in South Street. “How did one, out of bitterness and a sense of injustice, struggle, not to overthrow the dominant group, but to be embraced by it?” (245). These were questions that Smith asked himself, too, one of the reasons why he was highly skeptical about the potential of the civil rights movement.
to "What is to be done?", as Smith has his protagonist ask _where_ exactly his cosmopolitan responsibilities lie.

**Sensitivity and Cosmopolitan Courage: The Stone Face**

*The Stone Face* is, perhaps surprisingly, the only African American novelistic engagement of its time with “the Algerian question” in France. Written at roughly the same time as Wright was working on his “Island of Hallucinations,” Smith dared to put at the center of his novel what Wright tried to avoid under all circumstances: an open critique of French policies and attitudes toward Algeria and Algerians on French soil. As such, it is important not only, as historian Tyler Stovall has emphasized, for historical reasons, or for its considerable artistic merits, but, in our context also for its sophisticated critical cosmopolitanism. Written in straightforward and lucid prose, Smith’s story of the African American expatriate Simeon, who, in comfortable Parisian exile, is confronted with the question of which side he wants to choose—that of the oppressor or of the oppressed—develops such a remarkable emotional momentum and reads with such force that it becomes difficult to put the novel down. This

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momentum and force are developed out of a powerful combination of ideological conflict and deep emotional engagement, the twin engines of cosmopolitan development. These not only drive the main character Simeon forward, but have also the potential to affect the reader to a degree that he can understand and even share some of Simeon’s cosmopolitan insights.

Simeon Brown is perhaps the best example of Smith’s tendency to create sensitive, thoughtful, and intellectual heroes who are distinguished by the ambiguous privilege of being particularly insightful and at the same time particularly tormented by their insights. Simeon is an African American painter from Philadelphia who, like so many fellow expatriates, has escaped to Paris to find peace and safety. “Violence,” he thinks in relief upon his arrival in Paris, “would not be necessary, murder would not be necessary” (3). Simeon has left the U.S. in order to prevent himself from one day running amok, killing the man who had stabbed him in the eye, or killing some other man who might try the same. Artistically, he is at an impasse. He can paint only a single motif: the face of the man that blinded one of his eyes, an “inhumanly cold face with dull, sadistic eyes, a thin mouth, tightly clamped jaw and deathly pale skin” (27). The man who had this face, Simeon is convinced, “felt no human emotion, no compassion, no generosity, no wonder, no love! The face was that of hatred: hatred and denial—of everything, of life itself” (27). The stone face that gives the novel its title is, in short, the face of insensitivity, of indifference towards the Other. To be insensate, like stone, is to be cruel and inhuman, and is thus also to be dangerous. His own

sensitivity, Simeon declares early on in the novel, “was a curse” in the black ghetto in which he spent his childhood, as it is now as an adult, because the world as a whole is “violent and brutal” (25). In Paris, though, this same sensitivity—and the heightened vulnerability and understanding that come with it—prove central for his cosmopolitan development.

Apart from the haunting images of his past, Simeon seems indeed to have found in Paris exactly the kind of racism-free paradise that Hayes Dawkins and his fellow black GIs in Last of the Conquerors imagined—at least we are tempted to believe so at the beginning of the novel. The biggest obstacle to life in paradise, it seems, is Simeon’s own conflicted emotions around the topic of racism. In an early scene that gains in importance and complexity as one continues to read the book, Simeon sits on the terrace of the Café Tournon and enjoys his new quarters when “his eye [is] caught by the radiant face of a dark-haired young woman a few tables away from him” (5). Simeon at first feels too self-conscious to approach “an unfamiliar woman, white to boot,” but finally brings himself to ask if he can buy her a drink. The woman declines, without even looking at him, and Simeon is mortified. He was certain that everyone on the terrace and on the street was staring at him. He was alone and naked on a stage, a blazing spotlight on him. . . . Face burning like a torch, Simeon bowed stiffly and turned to walk back to his table . . . . When he sat down again, [he] cursed himself. Slowly, against his will, the old, insidious thought came to him, the conditioned reflex. Racism. It was omnipresent. It was here in Paris, too. . . . He now detested the girl, with her mocking smile (5-6).

Just a few seconds after this quick indictment of both the girl and his new surroundings, however, Simeon has to learn that things are other than he had thought:
The young woman’s face lighted up as she looked toward the street... A tall African, black as anthracite, walked up smiling up to her. They embraced and kissed. The people on the terrace continued to talk, to sip their drinks, ignoring this scene as they had ignored the scene with Simeon. The African and the young woman left the terrace arm in arm. As they passed Simeon, who could not help staring, the girl looked at him with a broader, mocking smile, and winked. (6-7)

In a clever stylistic move, Smith here introduces the topic of “omnipresent” racism, only to dismantle it in the next moment as the paranoid imagination of a man who is haunted by his American past. The French girl is not declining Simeon’s offer because he is black – her boyfriend is blacker than he is. She is not interested because she is spoken for, irrespective of skin color or race, and Simeon is left dumbfounded by this clashing of the French ideological context with his own, American one. Smith thus very effectively suggests that in Paris nobody has a problem with interracial relationships. But he only assures us of the lack of racism in French society in order to dismantle later the very sense of security this scene offers. Racism, we soon learn, is not absent in France. It is just different, targeted at a different group of people.

We get a taste of this ugly Real of French society a little later on in the story, after Simeon has made himself at home in Paris, has accepted it as a place where he can live in peace and without racist attacks, has even met a woman and fallen in love. When he passes one day a café near the Odéon Metro station in Paris’s St.-Germain-de-Prés, a voice shouts out in thickly accented English: “Hey! How does it feel to be a white man?” (55). At first, Simeon is startled at this outburst, since the label seems more than a little absurd to him. After all, the man who has spoken and his three companions are all Algerians, and much lighter-skinned than he is. Being the sensitive
man that he is, however, Simeon recognizes almost instantly that the epithet is nevertheless true. Here, in the Paris of the early 60s, he is indeed enjoying the privileges of a white man, and it is the Algerian minority that takes the place of, as one of them puts it, “the niggers.” (57). Simeon is shocked at this realization, at this eruption of the French Real into the comfortable reality with which Paris has presented him.

In Gadamer’s terms, the shock and discomfort that Simeon experiences at the moment of recognition of the Other’s – in this case the Algerian – perspective is precisely what makes understanding possible, allowing him to see his own perspective as historical and contingent, not natural or necessary. In Simeon’s case, it is the understanding that the Algerian minority in France is faced with a dominant Other that might be just as hostile and insurmountably other as the non-black part of American society was/is for Simeon. That same Other, however, that is so hostile to Algerians, is not so for Simeon. In the moment of colliding ideologies and through the shock of recognition that results from this, Simeon is able to historicize his own (African American) perspective, strengthening the Other of the Algerian perspective against his own, and thus arriving at a clearer understanding of French society and his own position in it.

The ugly Real of French racism shoulders its way into the story again and again. What is at first almost unnoticeable – Simeon early on glances at a newspaper that says, “MOSLEMS RIOT IN ALGIERS. FIFTY DEAD” (7) – gains in frequency and intensity, until it finally takes center stage in Simeon’s life. When he befriends the group of Algerians who called him a “white man” in front of the Café Odeon, Simeon
accepts an invitation to visit some of their homes in the Goutte d’Or, the immigrant-
populated “Drop of Gold” in the north of Paris. The shabby and overcrowded quarters
that he finds there trigger memories of the South Philadelphia ghetto for him. Not only
does he learn that Algerians for the most part cannot find housing in any other, and
less rundown, parts of town, he also experiences a police raid in which he has to show
his papers to an armed French policeman. After recognizing that Simeon is “not an
Arab” (94), the policeman wants to know what he is doing in this part of town. “Visi-
ting a friend,” is Simeon’s answer, upon which the police officer looks at him sus-
piciously. “You work for the FLN?” (94). Simeon answers in the negative and is chas-
tised by the French officer: “You are a foreigner. I wouldn’t advise you to get mixed
up in our internal affairs; understand what I mean? You could be expelled from the
country at the slightest suspicion. . . . Stick among the foreigners. You’ve got nice
cafés over there on the Left Bank. Stay out of trouble” (95).

This advice was, of course, familiar to all American expatriates. As I have ex-
plained in my chapter on Richard Wright, expatriated African American intellectuals
in the 1950s and ’60s were silenced from two sides: the American authorities threat-
ened to revoke their passports if they criticized racial or other politics in the U.S.,
while French authorities signaled that they had better stay out of local politics if they
wanted to further enjoy their European privileges. Without question, his double bind is
one of the main reasons why so little criticism of French racism against Algerians was
expressed publicly by African American expatriates. There is, however, at least one
other, and more psychological, reason behind the aptly labeled African American
“blind spot” towards French racism—beyond the unfortunate but simple instrumentality of silence. One primary cause of this blind spot is explored compellingly in The Stone Face, suggesting that Smith had, at this point of his life, become highly aware of the dangerous tendency to overlook the Real of a society because of one’s own overwhelming need for it to be perfect. If he himself blindly followed that tendency in Last of the Conquerors, he is acutely aware of it in The Stone Face and forces his one-eyed protagonist Simeon to arrive at the same awareness.

After his experience in the Goutte d’Or, Simeon sees his Algerian friends more often, and develops a close friendship with one of them. This friend, Ahmed, expresses early on in the novel his belief that he and Simeon are, despite their differences in nationality and ethnicity, connected through a shared sensitivity. In one of the most intriguing moments of the novel, Simeon spontaneously decides to take Ahmed and three other Algerians to his favorite night club. The five men are greeted with icy silence by the assembled guests and waiters, and Simeon soon hears comments like, “Strange company you keep” (108). The atmosphere in the club becomes increasingly uncomfortable; most distressing for Simeon, however, are his own thoughts and emotions:

How could this be? . . . Escape—that was what he . . . wanted. Sitting here with the Algerians he was a nigger again to the eyes that stared. . . . For one horrible instant he found himself withdrawing from the Algerians—the pariahs, the untouchables! He, for the frightening second, had rejected identification with them! Not me! Not me! Can’t you see, I’m different! the lowest part in him had cried. He looked down with shame. (108, ellipses in original)
Here, Smith powerfully demonstrates the role of social pressure in the creation of racism. It is other people’s alienating stares that make Simeon want to abandon the men who just a second ago were his best friends. Having lived for months as an accepted if foreign member of French society, and having enjoyed the unfamiliar privilege of being able to walk into any restaurant or club regardless of his dark skin, Simeon now realizes not only how quickly these privileges can be lost again, but also how much he wants them. And his urge to reject identification is, of course, an urge to deny sensitivity – the first movement in the direction of becoming a stone face himself.

After the initial moment of shock has passed, however, Simeon regains control over his fears and feels “that he had crossed the bridge, and felt at one with the Algerians. He felt strangely free—the wheel had turned full circle” (109). In this important moment of compassion and identification, Simeon chooses solidarity with his friends over the privilege of being a “white man.” This, he knows to be the right and—in the terms I have chosen here—cosmopolitan thing to do. As a result, he has to give back his key to the private night club, to which he now, as a “nigger lover,” can no longer belong. It is not so much his theoretical knowledge of an abstract morality, however, but his deep friendship and admiration for Ahmed, that practically “forces” him to decide against his own yearning for comfort and peace, and to choose an uncomfortable solidarity with the oppressed instead. Emotional engagement here, again, proves to be a most vital mode of cognition in the moment of ideological conflict. Like Smith himself, who was good friends with Algerians and publicly assumed a pro-Algerian position although that was potentially unsafe for his own status in France, Simeon here
makes the choice to expose and thus move beyond a reassuring blind spot. This moment of facing the ugly Real of French or any society, regardless of the consequences this may have for one's own person, is critical for the psychic movement of the critical cosmopolitan.

A second emotional bond that becomes almost as crucial for Simeon’s cosmopolitan development is his love relationship with the Polish girl Maria. Maria is a Jewish concentration camp survivor who hopes to make a career as an actress in Paris. She presents herself as a lighthearted young woman, determined to leave the horror of the camp behind, but Simeon soon comes to understand that she is haunted by the same face that keeps troubling him. When Maria talks about the German camp commander who kept her and her family alive but also regularly raped the then 9-year-old girl, she emphasizes the moments when

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\text{his face would change. I cannot describe it; it was terrible—yes, like the face in your portrait; his eyes would be hard, the blood would go away and his skin would be white like ashes, cold like stone. (77)}
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This parallel between Simeon’s and Maria’s fate, and the implied linking of Jewish and black histories of abuse (not unfamiliar from Last of the Conquerors), is only the beginning. Smith also uses the figure of Maria to make clear that “not even” the Algerians—who clearly stand in for the oppressed in the novel—without racism and discriminating attitudes toward Others. When Maria shows Simeon a new bracelet and feels she might have been overcharged by the shopkeeper, one of the Algerians blurts out: “Probably some dirty Jew sold it to you,” and Simeon is “stunned. Those words from one of the Algerians? Abruptly a whole mental and psychological structure he had
built up since the first day he talked to Hossein seemed to collapse” (142). Maria, on her part, reacts with icy anger: “I am a dirty Jew,” she tells Hossein, who almost reacts with shock at the realization of his faux pas. After all, he cares for Maria, and realizes only in the moment of her reaction that he has hurt her feelings with his thoughtlessly voiced prejudice. This important moment in *The Stone Face*, in which the oppressed proves just as susceptible to racial prejudice as the oppressor, not just shows Smith’s capacity as a writer, but also gives evidence of his own critical cosmopolitanism. His many intersubjective experiences, shifting emotional attachments, and critical distance help save him from exchanging an older ideological framework simply for a new one—in this case the assumption that the oppressed is a pure victim and without fault. Thus, he manages to voice his passionate critique of French and American racism without romanticizing or idealizing the victims of that racism.

The vehicle of this critique in the novel remains Simeon, who, after the incidence in the night club, gets more and more involved not only with Ahmed personally, but also with the Algerian liberation struggle as a political project. He has heated discussions with fellow expatriates about the question of whether they should get involved in the Algerian fight for independence or whether the intensifying civil rights movement in the U.S. obligates black Americans to go back “home” to join their struggle. Simeon admits that he feels guilty about not being in the U.S. for that struggle, and wonders if he should go back, but others, like Babe Carter, make clear that they, despite their feelings of guilt, will never go back: “I ain’t goin back to the States,” explains Babe. “The States don’t say nothing to me. I been away from all this
racism so long that I wouldn’t be able to adjust to it. Probably end up killing somebody or getting’ killed” (145). Babe, here, on the one hand voices Simeon’s own fears, while insisting on the other hand on a kind of deliberate blindness toward French racism that Simeon just cannot share.

As a result, Simeon becomes increasingly bitter about “the foreigners,” who live “in a fantasy world, like foam floating on the sea of French society” (175). And, after meeting Ahmed, who in the interim joins the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), he keeps pondering the possibility of becoming more politically engaged, be that by returning to the U.S. or by going to Algeria or to sub-Saharan Africa. It is in Paris, however, that he finally feels compelled to take action. Witnessing the notorious massacre of Algerians on October 17, 1961—of which Smith offers a description that historian Tyler Stovall lauds for its astounding accuracy—Simeon cannot control himself any longer when he sees a French policeman beating an Algerian woman and her baby on the streets of Paris. Coming to the rescue of woman and child, he suddenly recognizes the policeman’s face:

That face he knew so well, the face in America he had tried to escape. . . . The policeman’s face was distorted and twisted with the joy of destruction, his eyes narrowed, red dots of excitement on his deathly pale skin. The face exploded in front of Simeon. (203)

It is the stone face that Simeon sees in front of him, another incarnation of the face of insensitivity and cruelty. It is in this moment that the last bit of the fantasy of a peaceful Paris collapses. Tormented by the pain in the socket of his missing eye,

Simeon “swung his fist into that hated face, with all his strength” (203). The man who hates nothing more than violence feels forced into violent action himself, in defense of the helpless woman and child as much as in desperate and helpless revenge for his own injuries.

After attacking the policeman, Simeon is arrested and shipped to a prison camp outside of Paris; there, surrounded by “literally thousands of Algerians . . . most of them bleeding from head wounds,” he finally comes to the understanding that

the face of the French cop . . . the face of the Nazi torturer at Buchenwald and Dachau, the face of the hysterical mob at Little Rock, the face of the Afrikaner bigot and the Portuguese butcher in Angola, and, yes, the black face of Lumumba’s murderers – they were all the same face. Wherever this face was found, it was his enemy; and whoever feared, or suffered from or fought against this face was his brother. (205)

Simeon, who has understood that being or joining the oppressed is the only way to avoid becoming an insensate, inhuman stone face himself, here also realizes that being the subject of oppression links him to every other oppressed being in the world. And that realization puts him at the same time in opposition to the oppressor. The cosmopolitan, Smith knows now, will be faced with racial and social injustice everywhere he goes, and his opponent—the oppressor—can assume any nationality, race or skin-color. This is why Paul Gilroy is especially sympathetic to this passage in The Stone Face, seeing it as a marker of Smith’s insight “that the face of racial hatred could be fought when and wherever it appeared” (Against Race, 322). Smith’s big failure, according to Gilroy, is that he “was either unprepared or unable to follow the logic of his own insight to its obvious conclusion” (322). This unpreparedness is expressed, in
Gilroy’s view, in Smith’s decision to send Simeon ‘back home’ at the end of the novel, to join the American civil rights struggle—a decision that rendered what had been to that point an exceptionally complex novel, psychologically, far simpler.

While I share Gilroy’s regret about Smith’s choice for the novel’s ending—which indeed culminates in Simeon’s decision to leave Paris and to go back to the U.S.—his claim that Simeon’s decision marks a sudden change from a complex to a simplistic narrative does not do the novel justice. Rather, Simeon’s feelings of guilt with regards to the civil rights struggle in the U.S. have been a constant threat throughout the novel. It is no coincidence that Simeon’s final realization about the universality of oppression mentions “the hysterical mob at Little Rock.” Earlier in the novel, we see Simeon’s almost existential conflict as he thinks about Lulu Belle entering the schoolhouse in Little Rock: “The more he thought about the little girl with the upright head, the more disgusted he felt with himself. He was over here, comfortable in Paris, leaving the fighting to the little Lulu Belles” (143-44).

Such moments of guilt, of neglected responsibility toward an “original” community at “home,” as depicted in the novel, were common among black American expatriates of the time (it was, for example, the reason why James Baldwin decided to go back to the U.S.); and it seems safe to say that Smith at least partly tried to resolve a real-life conflict within the novel. In a letter to his sister Phyllis in 1964, he writes, “I sometimes feel guilty of living way over here—especially when I read of ‘freedom marchers’ and the like. Maybe I’ll come back eventually. But, sincerely, I can’t stand that country [the United States]—not racially but politically and culturally. I am for
Castro and Mao Tse Tung." The fact that Smith – like many other African Americans – had learned to care about others first within a national framework had a double effect: on the one hand, it was a first step toward a more global commitment, but, on the other hand, it left him (and many of his compatriots) feeling guilty when he ‘abandoned’ this initial group identification to commit himself to larger—or simply other—causes.

In light of all this, Gilroy might well have sensed an inconsistency at the end of The Stone Face that stems from Smith’s inner conflict. But the novel’s conclusion certainly also stems at least as much from Smith's publisher’s sense of what might be marketable in 1963. It turns out that Smith had initially written a different ending for the novel, one in which Simeon left for Africa instead of the United States. It was his editor at Farrar, Straus, and Company, who took up a remark in a letter of Smith’s and suggested that the book might sell much better in the States if the hero went back to support the civil rights movement. Smith agreed and made the change. Whether he

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40 Smith to Phyllis Ford, 1964. Like many other black writers or intellectuals in the U.S. of the 1940s and 50s, Smith combined his critique of racial politics with a critique of social and economic politics in the U.S. and beyond. In the previously quoted letter to Carolyn Wolfe, Smith writes that “philosophically . . . I see no ‘solution’ to the race problem independent of a solution to the general world problems of cut-throat competition, economic uncertainty, etc. For many years I have been a student of economics and philosophy. . . .[I] believe that the next era belongs to Socialism, which will be imperfect but at least a step higher. I believe the one certain thing is eternal social and economic change.” Though never joining any communist organization in the U.S. or Europe, Smith outlook nevertheless remained influenced by Marxist thought throughout his life, and the internationalism that entailed certainly contributed its ideological share to his developing cosmopolitanism.

41 In the letter to Roger Straus, Smith mentions in a postscript that “if the Negro movement had reached this point before I wrote the book, “The Stone Face” would probably have had a different ending, with the hero returning to the States” (Smith to Straus, July 11, 1963). The implication of this is not that Smith maintained a sort of primary allegiance to the United States, but that he wanted most of all to participate in a movement that stood a realistic chance of success. John Farrar's reply that “it would be enormously better for THE STONE FACE if you were to return Simeon to the United States” suggests the importance of financial concerns in the novel's new ending. Farrar continues, "We were able to call back the proofs, and if you do agree with us that this change should be made, if you can do it quickly,
did so for ideological or for materialistic reasons, we cannot know. What we do know, however, and what Gilroy does not mention, is that Smith himself did not go back to the U.S., but instead went a year later, in 1964, to Kwame Nkrumah’s Ghana—to help Shirley Graham Du Bois build Ghana Television, as well as the Ghana School for Journalism and the first African news service. This decision, I would argue, further complicates Gilroy’s argument that the ending of *The Stone Face* manifests a “capitulation to the demands of a narrow version of cultural kinship that Smith’s universalizing argument seems to have transcended” (324). Smith’s own life, more indeed than Gilroy quite acknowledges, does “measure up to the best historical examples yielded by the black Atlantic itinerants whose lives might be used today to affirm other, more timely and rewarding choices” than a simple falling back into African American “ethnic authenticity” (324). As Smith writes in “Through Dark Eyes,” he went to Ghana, because he “wanted to participate in what was going on in the world,” instead of “rotting in Paris” (18-9). For him, if not for Simeon, this participation had to be not in the U.S. but in one of the newly independent countries in Africa. He recorded some of his experiences in Ghana in his 1970 *Return to Black America*, which, regrettably, Gilroy does not include in his otherwise very valuable discussion of Smith’s cosmopolitanism.

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we do not need to postpone too much. We will, of course, fix the jacket also.” Farrar to Smith, July 24, 1963. Farrar, Straus, and Company Files. New York Public Library.
Cosmopolitan Guilt, Struggle and Affirmation: Return to Black America

When *Return to Black America* went to press, Smith had been expatriated from the U.S. for over 19 years and was living with his third wife, the India-born Ira Reuben, in Paris. Like the "innocence" of *Anger at Innocence*, the “return” in the title may be somewhat misleading; it refers only to a three-week trip to the U.S. in 1967, where he had reported for AFP on what were called “the race riots.” Smith’s sole non-fiction book, *Return to Black America* is divided into two parts. Part I is entitled “Three Continents,” and deals with Smith’s experiences in the U.S., Europe and Africa, while the second part, “The American Jigsaw,” explores the different currents of the civil rights movement at the time of his visit. The second part is interesting for both the many divergent voices Smith presents as forming the kaleidoscope of the movement and for Smith’s own critical comments on these voices, however, it is Part I that is most valuable for an investigation of Smith’s cosmopolitanism in process. His ponderings on black life—and specifically his own life—in American, European and African contexts make clear that at this point, he had completely given up any hopes for an ideal or even near-ideal social setting for cosmopolitan life. Instead, he had given himself over to the critical analysis of different life-worlds, denouncing in each of them social, political and racial grievances, and expressing solidarity with whatever forces were working towards an increased social and racial justice.

“Three Continents” begins with Smith’s moment of return to the U.S. after 16 years of absence, and with the emotions this triggered in him. Michel Fabre maintains that *Return to Black America* contains “echoes of [Smith’s] rootlessness at the time,” of his feelings “that he did not belong anywhere” (253), and indeed, the text shows
moments of melancholia, even of a certain bitterness in his last published book.

Already its very first lines set the tone:

> For well over a third of my life, I had lived in France, Holland, Spain, Africa—mainly France, mainly Paris. Wandering black man, shedding many of the habits and reflexes born of my youth and birthplace, living on the edge of alien cultures. Black all the same, with the specific depth of emotional experience, the specific difficulties, and also the specific joys, that that entails. (3)

This does not sound like a man who “feels at home in Paris,” not like a man who has made himself an integral part of French society. Rather than Stoic, we might read Cynic cosmopolitanism into this statement, see the rootless wanderer who has been able to “shed habits and reflexes” of his original community, and thus has certainly become more worldly, but who also never quite belongs, never quite fits in. Also, we find a perhaps surprising emphasis on blackness, an emphasis that does not seem to quite fit with Smith’s previously professed transracial cosmopolitanism, but that fits very well with the feelings of guilt that prompt Simeon’s return to the U.S. at the end of *The Stone Face*. There seems to linger a certain disenchantment in these lines, one that is repeated and amplified in the following passage, which appears a little later in the book:

> the difference between European and American racism . . . was not one of kind, but one of degree. . . . A black person could live in greater peace with his environment in Copenhagen or Paris than in New York, not to speak of Birmingham or Jackson. But he found it at times harder to live at peace with himself. The black man who lived in Europe paid a heavy price. He paid it in a painful tearing of himself from his past, from things and people he loved or hated but which remained part of him . . . He paid for it in guilt . . . He paid for it, finally, in a sort of rootlessness . . . . The black man, no matter how long he lived in
Europe, drifted through those societies an eternal ‘foreigner’ among eternal strangers. (70-1)

Another shift of vantage point seems to have occurred in Smith’s final book, one that seems to lead away from a raceless cosmopolitanism and towards an affirmation of *transnational blackness*.

Such an affirmation ties in neatly with Brent Hayes Edwards’s understanding of *black diaspora*\(^{42}\) and thus stands almost opposed to Paul Gilroy’s avowal of a raceless cosmopolitanism in *Against Race*. This is interesting because, as I have mentioned earlier, it is Gilroy and not Edwards who claims two of Smith’s novels as examples for his line of argument, and interesting also because Gilroy diagnoses a collapse of Smith’s cosmopolitan vision at the end of *The Stone Face*. While I have shown in the previous section that the history of *The Stone Face*’s ending is more complex than Gilroy acknowledges, a consideration of *Return to Black America* further complicates the picture. If Smith’s decision to write a book about the American civil rights movement might in part be explained by feelings of guilt, his desire to specifically concentrate on *black* life on three continents in the first part of the book seems to have been influenced, if not caused, by his experiences in Ghana. The question remains, however, of whether Smith *indeed* abandoned his ideal of raceless cosmopolitan life in his last published book, to turn instead to a decidedly *black* cosmopolitanism, even a

\(^{42}\) As I have already mentioned in chapter III, Edwards prefers the idea of a politically oriented black diaspora and internationalism over what for him is always a much more individually developed and less political cosmopolitanism. In *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (2003), Edwards singles out Paris of the 1920s and 30s as the epicenter of black modernism and internationalism, and emphasizes the importance of translation for negotiations between different cultures of African descent.
black internationalism. A closer look at the third section of Part I of *Return to Black America*, entitled “The Call of Africa,” offers a more satisfying answer to this question.

Smith recollects his first days in Accra, the capital of Ghana, in a way that recalls passages of Wright’s *Black Power* (1954). Again and again, Smith evokes the African drums, distant and near, as well as the bright nights full of stars, and people “eating and laughing and dancing.” Just like Wright, he approaches a nocturnal festivity, not knowing “what to do,” and is immediately hailed by “an enormous jolly woman,” who orders him to “come on in. Sit down. Dance,” and who reminds Smith of his own family in the U.S. (98-9). Like Wright, Smith recalls eating, drinking, and spending the night “the African way”:

> The drummers played, everyone danced, everyone laughed, the fou-fou burned the stomach, the beer cooled the stomach, night birds screamed. . . . I stayed there until dawn. To this day, I still do not have the slightest idea where I was. No one tried to charge us a penny. We were guests . . . brothers. That was normal. That was African. (96)

This, however, is where the commonalities between Wright’s and Smith’s description of Ghana end. While Wright self-identifies as a Westerner and American in these surroundings, and is more than a little conflicted about the question of how much he should or must identify with these people that he experiences as primitive, immodest and superstitious, Smith embraces Africa without hesitation. Unlike Wright, he believes “the spiritual, cultural, and physical affinity between Black Africa and Black America” to be “immediately evident” (97). Smith, of course, was at a huge advantage, since, while Wright came alone and only for an extended visit, he himself came
with his family to live in Ghana. This naturally made acceptance and integration much
easier, despite the white skin color of his French wife. His own dark skin, on the other
hand, seems to have been what made life in Africa particular liberating for Smith:

Almost from the moment the black American arrives in Africa, the
bell, of which he had hardly been conscious, stops ringing in his ears.
Wonderful reversal of visibility: from the standpoint of color, he melts
into the black crowds . . . but as a man, he is completely ‘visible,’ for,
since he can no longer be ‘defined’ by the stereotypes of race, he has to
be assessed as an individual. (96)

In terms of race-thinking and cosmopolitanism, this is an interesting move. There is
little question at this point that Smith wanted to transcend categories of race
throughout all of his life, that he hated nothing more than being pinned down as a
‘black American.’ Like Claude, the hero of South Street, he wanted his skin color to
be of no more importance than his hair color. Ironically, however, the first time that
this longing becomes livable for him seems to be when he enters a nearly all-black
society. Only in such black surroundings, he feels, can his skin color cease to be of
primary importance to his interlocutors, so that they can start seeing him as an
individual. Does that mean, then, that race-blindness is only possible in a community
that shares the same skin color? Would that not be an enormous compromising of the
cosmopolitan dream?

At first glance, one would certainly think so, especially if one understands
cosmopolitanism as a transracial project as I—and Smith—have to this point. But in
reconsidering Smith’s investment in the dialectic between individual cosmopolitan
agency and the cosmopolitanism—or lack thereof—of his social surroundings, it be-
comes clear that Smith was actually after something else. One can only speculate how
tired he must have been of being defined by Others according to his skin color, and
what a powerful experience life in a nearly all-black society must have been for him
(as it was for many other African Americans at the time). In Africa, for the first time
ever, his skin color became—in a certain sense—truly unimportant. If he was indeed
exclusively “assessed as an individual” as a result, however, is questionable. Richard
Wright, we might remember, was addressed by all of his African interlocutors as the
stereotyped “American,” and even Smith admits about other African Americans that
they “found it hard to ‘get across’ to the average African” (101). We thus must assume
that his dream of being defined “as an individual” only, came primarily true in terms
of racial stereotypes, and not in terms of cultural ones—which can be just as
distortingly projected onto a person. And if we glance at the outline of his unpublished
“Through Dark Eyes”—written after Return to Black America—we find there next to
the headwords “the pleasure and relief of being able to melt with the crowd” much
more critical points, like “servants who insisted on calling me ‘Master’,” “dignified
distance to the Africans,” or “my growing consciousness that I was a ‘foreigner’” (2).
Smith was, we see from these hastily thrown down lines, conscious of the fact that
racial invisibility did not automatically guarantee the omission of all stereotypes and
prejudices, and that he was still, in Ghanaian society, seen through the lens of
ideological contexts and not as “an individual” pure and simple.

But that does not mean, in fact, that in his enthusiasm Smith made the same
mistake with Ghana he had made 18 years earlier with Germany. As becomes apparent
upon reading Return to Black America, his writing on the black society of Ghana be-
trays the same healthy distance and critical eye as his writing on France or the U.S. Thus, we should read his remark about being “completely visible as a man” as another important commentary upon the relationship between self and social context. How much the individual human being can live the kind of life I am calling cosmopolitan, Smith underlines here again, depends to at least some degree on how much cosmopolitanism his current environment *allows* for. While it is always the task of the cosmopolitan, in my take on Smith’s view, to engage critically with his environment, he will at the same not escape its limiting influences entirely. The process of cosmopolitanism, as I have stated before, is less about the ideals to be defined than about the way they are defined and redefined—in engagement with both external circumstances and internal landscapes and emotions.

Emotions are enabling and limiting at the same time in the cosmopolitan process, because they are—just like our thoughts and beliefs—not something that we have privately and independently. Instead, we at least partially depend on what Raymond Williams has called “structures of feeling”: socially induced emotions generated by values and practices shared by a specific group, class, or culture (132).⁴³ While such structures of feelings are partly based on the articulated structure of beliefs we call ideologies, they go well beyond the conscious level and include collective desires and yearnings that may or may not fit easily under the heading “ideology.” For the subject-individual, this means that it is never easy to tell which part of his or her felt

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⁴³ In *Marxism and Literature* (1977), Raymond Williams uses the term “structure of feeling” to designate the emotional bonding generated by values and practices shared by a specific group, class, or culture (132). Structures of feeling, according to Williams, are “specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and inter-relating continuity” (132).
emotions is socially induced, inflected by ideology, and thus perhaps in dire need for change. It is for this reason that the cosmopolitan in process must always be highly aware of—*sensitive* to—the ideological contexts of his or her current habitat, and always open to, perhaps even consciously searching for, ideologies that contradict and question them. Only this can we describe as *critical* cosmopolitanism.

This is, I argue, what Smith at least attempted to do in all of his later writings. When writing about Ghanaian society in *Return to Black America*, Smith retains the sharp criticality he displayed in *The Stone Face* with regards to French society, and sheds a similarly critical and analytical light on the social and political situation in Ghana. Like Wright, he—although arriving ten years later—is enthusiastic about the political project that Nkrumah had been building: “socialism in an African context, socialism which takes African traditions into account’” (1970, 97). But he combines his enthusiasm for life in an independent African country with a sharp analysis of the power gradient between the Ghanaian elite and Western powers, and of the severe internal social injustices in Ghana. Nkrumah, he writes, “was trying to ‘build socialism’ with an economy bound hand and foot to the capitalist West” (98). Ghana, then, although it made life in *racial* ways easier for Smith than any other of the countries he had previously lived in—especially regarding the simple question of visibility—was by no means without its *social* and *political* problems. And Smith, the experienced journalist, was clear-sighted enough to not be tempted to glorify Africa as a racial paradise or a utopia of any other kind.44

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44 Still, he makes clear in *Return to Black America*, as well as in personal letters, that he would have stayed in Ghana if Nkrumah had not been violently overthrown by the pro-Western National Liberation
Smith thus ends his career by resisting the imposition of utopian fantasies anywhere—in Ghana, in the newly redefined black community in the U.S. (which he censures for the violence of its struggle), or in Europe. Instead, he remains critical vis-à-vis all of these possible habitats, always pointing to their weaknesses and imperfections, but also acknowledging their strengths and improvements over time. With this criticality comes some distance and disenchantment in Smith’s late writing as regards the different communities he discusses, and this relative distance might indeed be the difficult effect of an increasingly cosmopolitan vision. The “eternal foreignness” that he experienced to some degree in all of his habitats, might have been in certain ways more a result of his developing cosmopolitanism than of his blackness as such, an experience shared with many other, non-black cosmopolitans. Perhaps Martha Nussbaum's claim in “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism” (1994)—that “becoming a citizen of the world is often a lonely business” (15)—is at least partially true. True to the degree that one becomes too critical to completely subscribe to the fantasized reality of any national, racial or religious ideology, always resorting immediately to other, conflicting ideologies that will then clash with the one at hand. The ensuing experience of the Real makes, in Paul Smith’s terms, room for “a certain discernment” and for the possibility of agency, but it also makes it difficult to easily and
seamlessly “fit in” in any given community and to experience the emotionally satisfying experience of subscription to a unitary ideology.

Nussbaum’s statement may miss the mark, though, in another respect, because being truly lonely would mean that there are no others to talk to, no community at all. This, I argue, must not at all be the case for the critical cosmopolitan. After all, as we have seen in Smith’s work and life, there are always others that the cosmopolitan can take to his heart, people to support and to solidarize with. This is because the ambiguous quality of sensitivity, which Smith understood to be so crucial for human development, allows not only for critical thinking and discernment, but also makes possible empathy, and thus cosmopolitan solidarity with others across the boundaries of race, class, religion, or nation. If this indeed successfully alleviates the cosmopolitan’s relative loneliness, however, or if only other cosmopolitans are in the end able to truly relate to a cosmopolitan mind, must for the moment remain an open question.
CHAPTER 6

Tales of a Third Culture Kid: Pearl S. Buck
and the Challenges of Transnational Sentiment

When, in 1938, Pearl Sydenstricker Buck received the Nobel Prize for Literature, the majority of the American literary establishment was vaguely shocked. Given the fact that Buck was only the third American writer to be honored with the prize in the 37 years of its existence (following Sinclair Lewis and Eugene O’Neill), one might have expected a little more patriotic solidarity and pride from Buck’s peers. But not only was the general consensus among American literati at the time that no American woman writer produced work significant enough to deserve the important award; many felt that Pearl Buck was a particularly poor choice. Robert Frost unflatteringly declared, “If she can get [the Nobel Prize], anybody can,” and William Faulkner famously got so upset that he declared the prestige of the award to be ruined. “I don’t want it,” he vowed, “I’d rather be in the company of Sherwood Anderson and Theodore Dreiser than S. Lewis und Mrs. Chinahand Buck.” Of course, Faulkner did not hesitate to accept the Nobel Prize when he later was selected for it, but his brusque reaction was symptomatic of the general discontent that Buck’s nomination evoked in U.S. literary circles. Many simply felt there would have been much better, more deser-

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1 Robert Frost as quoted in Warren Sherk. *Pearl S. Buck: Good Earth Mother*. Philomath, Oregon: Drift Creek Press, 1992, pp. 106. William Faulkner quoted in Sherk, pp. 106. The term “China Hand” denotes a China expert who has lived in the country and is thus well informed about its language, culture, and people. Originally, the term referenced 19th-century merchants in the Chinese treaty ports, but during the first half of the 20th century, it also came to denote American Civil Service Officers and China experts like John Paton Davies and John S. Service. Faulkner’s use of the term in reference to Buck, is more than just a little mocking.
vying candidates within the field of American literature. Others saw Buck as not really an American writer in the first place.

At least that latter objection was not entirely groundless. At the time of the Nobel Prize bestowal, Buck was 46 years old, and she had spent all but nine of those years outside of the United States. Born in Hillsboro, West Virginia, but taken by her missionary parents to China when she was only three months old, Buck lived out most of her childhood and adolescence in the small town of Chinkiang in the Chinese province of Kiang-su. The young girl grew up fully bilingual in Chinese and English, experiencing China as “the real, the actual world” and the U.S. as only a “dream-world” (*My Several Worlds* 5). This kind of upbringing, as I will show in section one of this chapter, makes Buck a typical Third Culture Kid, as that term has been defined by David Pollack and Ruth Van Reken. A Third Culture Kid (TCK), in this definition, is a person whose childhood is spent navigating significantly culturally different worlds and who thus “builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any” (19). The typical TCK, often the child of such highly mobile parents as diplomats, NGO employees, missionaries or corporate personnel, is raised in a cultural environment that is marked by both hybridity and constant mobility. As a result, Pollack and Van Reken explain, the TCK creates a hybrid identity and lives in a personal and unique “third culture,” one that neither fully resembles the home nor any one host culture, and one that is also more than a simple mélange of the two. Across the board, individual TCKs thus live in extremely disparate and highly private third

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cultures, but, as argued by Pollack and Van Reken, they nonetheless share with one another not only certain defining factors in their lives but also a lot of resultant characteristics and attitudes. Given that up until WWII, 66% of all TCKs came from missionary families, it is no great stretch to suggest that Buck’s life circumstances might have met the above conditions. And indeed, while Buck’s family was relatively permanently installed in Chinkiang and firmly circumscribed by Protestant ideology, her own world as a child was a highly hybrid one, at least as much Chinese as American. This cross-cultural nature of Buck’s childhood years was further amplified by her ongoing international mobility, and the combination of both had significant effects on her cosmopolitan development.

Buck thus constitutes something of an outlier case among the authors I am considering. After all, she is the only one who did not deliberately expatriate herself as an adult, but instead experienced an unchosen transculturation during her childhood. As her biographer Peter Conn rightly emphasizes, “Pearl Buck [was] an involuntary expatriate. She had not chosen China; she had simply found herself growing up there, absorbed in a society radically different from America in almost every point” (163, my emphasis). While such unchosen transculturation, to be distinguished from the more traumatic cultural rupture of the refugee experience, was still a relatively rare (and often privileged) way of growing up in the early 20th century, it is increasingly common today—not least because of the ever-increasing geographical mobility of people, goods, and cultural practices we call “globalization.” This is why Pollock and Van

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3 Pollock and Van Reken even quote Buck as a typical Third Culture Kid, pp. 48.
4 Other biographers of Pearl Buck include her sister Grace Yaukey, Irwin Block, Paul Doyle, and Nora Sterling.
Reken argue that “the TCK experience is a microcosm of what is fast becoming normal throughout the world. . . . Growing up among cultural differences is already, or soon will be, the rule rather than the exception—even for those who never physically leave their home country” (7). And all this is only further enhanced by the fact that more and more children now grow up with unstable blends of differing values and traditions as a result of increased social mobility and changing family formations.5

This is why Buck’s experience of unchosen transculturation and the specific effects it had on her developing cosmopolitan vision is of particular importance in this dissertation on the process of cosmopolitanism. What interests me on a theoretical level is how exactly people develop cosmopolitan mindsets and what experiences further or hinder such development. If we understand Buck as something of an early prototype for an experience that is—in its many different varieties—well on its way to becoming the norm, the insights we gain into her particular cosmopolitan trajectory may help us better understand the chances of and challenges for engaged world citizenship in an increasingly hybridized, globalized world. What we notice when comparing Buck with the authors discussed so far is that her cosmopolitanism was initiated and furthered by experiences that, at least in principle, were very similar to

5 According to sociologists Williams, Sawyer, and Wahlstrom, already today nuclear families with the original biological parents constitute only about 24.1% of all American households, while roughly 75% of all children in the United States spend at least some time in a single-parent household (Williams, Sawyer, Wahlstrom, Marriages, Families & Intimate Relationships. New York: Allyn and Bacon, 2005). The Int. Child and Youth Carework attests that “the rapidly changing demographics of U.S. society have shattered traditional sources of belonging. The breakdown of the nuclear and extended families, the increase in single parenthood, the increase in the number of hours that working parents are away from the home, and the growing transience and mobilization of society have left the children . . . with a sense of feeling disconnected” (http://www.cyc.net.org/cyc-online/ cycol-0303-belonging.html, accessed on March 31, 2008). These are all indicators that in the future ever more people will grow up in circumstances in constant flux as far as family and cultural traditions and values are concerned.
those already discussed with respect to these authors: the experience of outsidersness and marginalization, the experience of personal contact and good-willed conversation with “other” cultures and life philosophies, the experience of clashing ideologies and emotional involvement in such moments of ideological interpellation. *When and how* these experiences arose, however, was different for Buck. As a Third Culture Kid, she had the opportunity to live through some of them much earlier, during the formative years of her identity.

In one respect, though, the timing of her life experiences rather closely resembled that of Smith and Wright’s. Spending her childhood as the daughter of missionaries in rural China, Buck was not only engulfed in a complex and ever unstable mixture of Chinese and American culture, but also confronted from the very beginning with the experience of *partial outsidersness*. Even as she moved effortlessly through the Chinese world of Chinkiang, the young American girl always was aware of the fact that she was not Chinese and therefore different from everybody around her. This experience of partial outsidersness is, as Conn points out, not totally unrelated to W.E.B. DuBois’s notion of ‘double-consciousness’ and thus to the African American experience of marginalization and insider-outsidersness (Conn 24). Insider-outsidersness, as I have observed in chapter 3 on Richard Wright, almost inevitably prevents the subject-individual from an “easy” or total identification with whatever is the dominant ideology of the person’s surroundings, and therefore facilitates a certain critical distance and the clashing of ideologies that I earlier found to be a driving force for (cosmopolitan) agency.
While the experience of insider-outsiderness is most often found in underprivileged racial, ethnic, or religious minorities, it can be shared, as Buck’s example demonstrates, by people who we would at first glance categorize as privileged. Thus, the question of what constitutes a cosmopolitan background is perhaps not so much about privilege or lack thereof, but it is rather about certain types of experiences—such as, among others, the experience of marginalization and insider-outsiderness—that have the potential to produce cosmopolitan outlooks. And these types of experiences occur (probably for very different reasons) for both elites and not-elites. So, while Buck could not become ‘truly’ Chinese in the cultural sense of the word, because she was an outsider to that society, she also could not become ‘truly’ American for the very same reasons. She thus shares—as she herself emphasized again and again—at least certain experiences with underprivileged minorities in the U.S.. And just as in the cases of Kay Boyle, Richard Wright and William Gardner Smith, experiences of partial outsiderness, repeated conversations with “Others,” and emotional involvement in moments of ideological interpellation seem to have been the main incentives for Buck’s emerging cosmopolitanism. Seen in this light, cosmopolitanism may develop not only as a response to certain modes of oppression, but as a response to certain modes of privilege as well.

Despite such important commonalities, however, both the trajectory and character of Buck’s emergent cosmopolitanism shows some significant differences from

6 As I have argued in chapter 1, with recourse to the work of Ulf Hannerz, we should not assume that experiences resulting from marginalization or intercultural mobility necessarily produce cosmopolitanism. Rather, as Hannerz rightly emphasizes, they have a tendency to initiate and facilitate the development of a cosmopolitan outlook.
those of Boyle, Wright, and Smith. Her TCK history, and the resulting experience of transculturation during her formative years, not only initiated her cosmopolitan development, but also shaped the *particular parameters* of her cosmopolitanism. Her cosmopolitan outlook was inflected by what Pollock and Van Reken understand as typical TCK qualities, such as high transcultural competence and the absence of racial prejudice, but it was also marked by somewhat “confused” cultural loyalties and—at least temporarily—an increased need for a fixed belonging. Buck certainly developed an excellent transcultural competence in radically different cultures, and her engaged writings affirmed again and again her deep belief in the value of cultural diversity, the equality of the races, and the utter stupidity and groundlessness of racism. And while she often expressed her “confused” cultural belonging—understanding herself as Chinese as much as American—Buck later went through a prolonged phase in which she emphasized her Americanness and her patriotic belonging to the U.S..

It was her extraordinary transcultural competence, and concomitant commitment to the sympathetic portrayal of foreign cultures, that earned Buck the Nobel Prize for literature in 1938. In his Award Presentation Speech, the Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy, Per Hallström, emphasized the “remarkable trend” in Buck’s books toward “opening a faraway and foreign world to deeper human insight and sympathy within our Western sphere—a grand and difficult task, requiring all [her] idealism and greatheartedness to fulfill as [she has] done.”

on the culturally mediating qualities of Buck’s work attests to her cosmopolitan engagement (and while such political grounds for the selection of a Nobel Laureate are anything but unusual for the Swedish Academy), it is easy to imagine that they must have seemed to many of her modernist contemporaries misguided and unconvincing.

In highlighting Buck’s ability to evoke sympathy in her reader, and in praising her idealism and greatheartedness, Hallström came close to presenting a laundry list of what for modernists were the unforgivable sins of sentimental—read bad—literature. After all, the oft-attested sentimentality of Pearl Buck’s novels marked her as a writer for the (female) masses. Together with her extremely prolific output—she wrote over 80 books, about 70 of them novels—and her tremendous commercial success, it all but assured that Buck would, regardless of her other achievements, be regularly disparaged by literati and reviewers alike, and for the most part ignored by literary scholars. Nobel Prize notwithstanding, the romantic focus and unsubtlety of her popular novels have thus been much more decisive factors in the critical judgment on Pearl Buck than her many political and social engagements.

Given Buck’s passionate cosmopolitan agenda and the immense influence she had, though, on the American public of especially the 1930s and 40s, a more intensive

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East. Instead, it is making the inscrutable East scrutable to Westerners that he presents as her accomplishment. The marking of the West as the norm and the East as the deviant implied here shows how even the presumably “politically correct” Swedish Academy participated in a Western Orientalist imagination that narrates the East as mysterious, impenetrable Other.

8 As Suzanne Clark shows in *Sentimental Modernism* (1991), a sentimental writing style and the addressing of a female mass readership were fatal for especially women writers in the 20th century, if they wanted to be respected as serious artists. This bias not only had a huge impact on Buck’s reputation as a writer (as far as critics and literati were concerned), but similarly affected, as I have shown in chapter II, Kay Boyle’s career.
academic engagement with her life and work seems almost imperative. Despite their sometimes overbearing sentimentalism, Buck’s novels are fictional expressions of her real-life politics and beliefs, and it was through these novels—in conjunction with her wide-ranging non-fiction work and her political activism—that Buck managed to influence the American public to a degree that few other American authors have reached. Peter Conn even goes so far as to say that “never before or since has one writer so personally shaped the imaginative terms in which America addresses a foreign culture” (xiv). If Buck’s many articles, speeches, and non-fiction books, as well as the institutions she founded, were created in the hopes of informing her fellow citizens about domestic and international issues (as well as lecturing them on their moral obligations), her novels spoke to their imaginations, a faculty that both Domna Stanton and Martha Nussbaum understand as central for the development of cosmopolitanism and intercultural understanding.10

9 Her work is infrequently taught at the college level or higher, and few academics are familiar with her books, other than The Good Earth. At the same time, however, she is one of the best known American authors to the general world public. A UNESCO survey conducted in 1970 tells us that Buck’s work has been translated into more foreign languages (145) than that of any other American writer (Liao 3). Tellingly, among the four authors I am discussing in some depth, Buck is the only one who always rings a bell when a non-academic—or non-literary scholar—asks me who I am working on. This gap between popular and critical success is, of course, not an uncommon phenomenon among writers of popular fiction, but given the stark discrepancy between Buck’s international public success as both a novelist and a cultural mediator, and her general dismissal by American academia, we—as academics—might ask ourselves if there is not a problem if we ignore writers simply because we do not consider their work as “worthy” or literary enough. Buck’s books advocated a deeply cosmopolitan agenda and had an immense influence on public opinion. This alone should make them worthwhile for research, and it might also make indicate that some of them are well suited for engaging a classroom in such important teaching topics as race relations and intercultural understanding.

10 One of the most prominent institutions founded by Buck was the East West Association, which offered interested Americans information about the culture, history and politics of Asian countries. It provided educational material such as pamphlets, books and films about and from China, India, and Korea, travel information and experience exchange for soldiers, relief workers and business travelers. It also regularly invited lecturers from Asian countries (as well as some Americans, such as, for example, African American activist Eslanda Robeson) to speak in the U.S. The association was in existence from 1942-1951...
Over the years, Buck used the imaginative potential of her novels not only to influence the image of China and the Chinese in the heads of the American population, but also to promote her understanding of human equality and sameness across the boundaries of race, religion, and nationality. In their sentimental—and sometimes unbearably didactic—way, quite a few of them feature both Eastern and Western (or black and white American) characters and function as passionate advocacies for interracial love, acceptance, and understanding.\footnote{Among those of Buck’s novels which are concerned with interracial love and other personal interracial and/or international relationships are the following: The Promise (1942), China Sky (1943), Letter From Peking (1957), The Angry Wife (1947), Pavilion of Women (1948), The Hidden Flower (1952), Come, My Beloved (1953), Satan Never Sleeps (1962), The New Year (1968), and Mandala: A Novel of India (1970).} In these novels, Buck offered a plenitude of historical facts—thus informing her reader—while at the same time making ample use of melodramatic language and sympathetic narration, asking the reader to identify and sympathize with characters involved in interracial love relationships. She thus attempted some kind of double strike, aiming at the rational as well as the emotional side of her audience’s cognition, believing that this was the best way to change their overall thought patterns and resulting private, social and political behavior. This conscious use of and belief in the transformative power of sentiment as a crucial factor driving interracial and transcultural/transnational understanding links Buck’s cosmopolitanism not only to that of Kay Boyle, but also to that of William Gardner Smith and, to some extent, to that of Richard Wright (who mostly tried to evoke negative emotions such as fear and contempt in his readers to bring them to the realization that racial prejudice and discrimination are wrong and socially destructive). All of the writers discussed here, including Buck, seem to have believed in this complex cognitive
matrix of emotions and thought, and in its value for their individual cosmopolitan projects. All of them, also, learned their own cosmopolitan lessons very much the same way: through the interplay of emotional and rational processes.

Buck’s cosmopolitanism, however, some critics argue, always retained the traces of her upbringing as the daughter of Southern Presbyterian missionaries. Karen J. Leong, for example, understands Buck’s “liberal cosmopolitanism and American nationalism” as direct outgrowths of “the evangelical Protestantism and social reform of her upbringing” (53). Like many Chinese scholars over the years, who have deplored a lack of authenticity and expertise in Buck’s writings, contemporary critics of Asian and Asian American literature and culture—almost the only academics who concern themselves with Buck—tend to find fault with Buck’s self-proclaimed position as a “China expert.”¹² However, while critics like Leong point to important problems when they deplore a certain lack of Chinese—or American—authenticity in Buck, I want to suggest that we look more closely at precisely this idea of cultural authenticity and purity. As I will discuss in section two of this chapter, we might understand some of Buck’s positions differently if we do not look at her, as Leong does, as a woman who purposefully and successfully exploited her childhood and early adult years in China for her American literary and public persona later on. If we understand her instead, as I am suggesting, as a typical Third Culture Kid, with all the advantages and inhibitions that that identity brings with it, we not only change our

understanding of Pearl Buck, but may also derive valuable insights about the particular brand of cosmopolitanism furthered by an unchosen transculturation during one’s formative years.

It is also in this context, I believe, that we have to understand the sometimes almost crude American patriotism that marks Buck’s work of the late forties and fifties. Despite her transcultural upbringing, and despite her cosmopolitan insights and engagements, Buck—like Wright and Boyle, and less like Smith—seems to have been unable to ever leave behind what must have been a deeply ingrained American patriotism. This seems particularly interesting precisely when we understand her as a Third Culture Kid, the product of a highly complex and conflicting set of cultural interpellations. Why is it, we cannot help but ask at this point, that American cosmopolitans display this tendency? Despite all their worldliness and embracement of foreign cultures, despite their highly developed criticality with regards to American flaws and failures, why do they retain such strong emotional ties to the idea and ideal of America? Why are they, after all is said and done, still so attached to what we cannot help but call the cosmopolitan dream of America? It will thus be my task in the final part of this chapter to press against Buck’s increasing tendency to equate cosmopolitanism with her utopian dream of America, and to ask the critical question of what it might be that binds her and other American cosmopolitans so closely to their American ideals and ideal Americas, even if they do, as Buck did, grow up in a culture that embraces completely different values.

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13 This cosmopolitan dream of America, as I have explained in chapter 1, goes back at least to Alexis de Tocqueville’s vision of the U.S. as an already cosmopolitan nation, resulting from its international immigration.
Pearl Sydenstricker in China: the Several Worlds of a Third Culture Kid

“I grew up in a double world,” writes Pearl Buck in her 1954 autobiography *My Several Worlds*. “Geographically, my worlds are upon opposite sides of the globe and for me, too, only the years of my life tie them together” (3). Buck here and elsewhere stresses the perceived distance and even incommensurability between the two cultural spaces in which she grew up, but also the fact that both were her worlds. This experience of growing up within distinctly separate cultures and thus, in a way, *in between* worlds, makes Buck what the globally mobile essayist and novelist Pico Iyer has called a ‘transcultural writer.’ It also makes her a prime example, however, of a Third Culture Kid. As noted, a TCK “is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parent’s culture” (*Third Culture Kids* 19). In the eyes of Pollack and Van Reken, there are two central factors that, in combination and *only* in combination, produce Third Culture Kids, and which make their experiences significantly different from those of children who grow up in their birthplaces, as well as from those of first-generation immigrants: first, TCKs are raised in a *genuinely* cross-cultural world, implying that they *actually live* in more than one cultural realm; and second, their world is a *highly mobile* one, implying that “either the TCKs themselves or those around them are constantly coming and going” (22).

While it is this specific combination of cross-cultural exposure *and* ongoing instability/mobility that is defining for the TCK experience, Pollack and Van Reken also stress the central importance of the age factor. Cultural dislocation, they explain, has very different effects on adults, who have formed their identity in a relatively
stable home culture, from on children, who are confronted with the challenge of forming their identity in the midst of constantly shifting and often conflicting cultural patterns and norms. The creation of a hybrid third culture identity only happens when permanently mobile transculturation occurs during the developmental years of an individual. “As they move in and out of various cultures,” Pollack and Van Reken explain, “TCKs not only have to learn new cultural rules, but more fundamentally, they must understand who they are in relationship to the surrounding culture” (54). The identity formation process of TCKs is thus a very specific one, fundamentally different from that of children who grow up in one place (or at least one cultural realm) only. This is further intensified by the fact that the parents of most TCKs are affiliated with some sort of transnational institution or economic entity—such as diplomatic corps, transnational corporations, NGOs, armies, or missionary boards—that not only determines the location and duration of their stay, but also inflects the family’s belief and value system. Pollack and Van Reken call this influence of the sponsoring organization "system identity," and state that while TCKs tend to employ a number of different coping strategies in dealing with the dominant system identity in their lives, it is a common factor that nearly all of them have to come to terms with.

The term ‘third culture’ was originally coined in the 1950s by social scientists John and Ruth Hill Useem.14 The two sociologists used it with reference to American expatriates who lived in more or less closed expatriate communities, often circumscribed by the aforementioned sponsoring organizations’ “specific communal systems

such as military bases, missionary compounds, and business enclaves” (Pollock and Van Reken 20). American expatriates living in these relatively closed communities—which were nevertheless informed by the surrounding host culture—developed, according to John and Ruth Hill Useem, a common ‘third culture’ which neither fully reproduced American nor the host culture, but which was shared by nearly all subjects in the community. In their 2001 book, Pollock and Van Reken build on the findings of the Useems, seeing very much the same happening to the children of expatriated families in general, even if there is no semi-closed “expat compound” delineating the boundaries of the community. Instead, they find that all Third Culture Kids, regardless of their originating home and their respective host cultures, build private ‘third cultures’ from available cultural components. Despite the endless diversity of these privately assembled third cultures, most TCKs share an astonishingly large number of traits, which the authors trace back to their common experience of early exposure to several and conflicting cultural realms (21). These traits, according to Pollack and Van Reken, are often paradoxical and include,

(a) an expanded worldview but confused cultural loyalties and values;
(b) cross-cultural enrichment but relative ignorance of home country;
(c) increased adaptability to foreign cultures but lack of true cultural balance.\(^\text{15}\)

15 The term ‘cultural balance’ seems a somewhat unhappy word choice here. After all, who is to determine what exactly ‘true cultural balance’ entails or even what it looks like? For Pollack and Van Reken, a “lack of true cultural balance” is the downside of an extremely high adaptability, since the person in question has “trouble figuring out their own value system from the multicultural mix they have been exposed to” (93). That, however, would imply that a person who was not exposed to such a mix does indeed have true cultural balance. Unfortunately, Pollock and Van Reken never clearly state how such balance would express itself. We can only assume that it would be the more or less strict adherence to certain cultural behaviour patterns and value systems, which give young human beings a certain amount of stability and security, if only because it offers them some constant resistance they can rebel against. On that reading, "lack of true cultural balance" sounds like little more than multi-systemic conditioning, precisely the phenomenon it is posited as an effect of.
(d) less general prejudice but sometimes also heightened and particularly unshakable specific prejudices;  
(e) a feeling of rootlessness and resulting restlessness; and  
(f) several developmental issues, such as delayed adolescent rebellion and psychological problems resulting from unresolved grief (79 ff.).

If we consult Pearl Buck’s autobiographical texts as well as the work of her biographers, we quickly discover that she displayed almost all of these traits—perhaps, as I mentioned earlier, not a surprising finding, since the children of missionaries are among the prime examples for TCKs in Pollack and Van Reken’s book.

Buck grew up under the rule of a very religious and patriarchal father, a Southern Presbyterian missionary of the old and reactionary, almost fanatical order. This father was also, as Peter Conn emphasizes in his biography of Buck, a passionate misogynist. Buck’s mother, while trying to be a good missionary wife, suffered her whole life both from her husband’s attitudes towards women and from her “exile,” as she called it, in China, never completely acclimating to life away from her home country. In *My Several Worlds*, as well as in other early non-fiction books, Buck praises the earnest dedication of her parents and the joy and peacefulness of her early life in China, but that praise is not without critique. As she makes clear in the two biographies of her parents, *The Exile* (1936) and *Fighting Angel* (1936), her patriarchal father very much lived out his religious and missionary zeal at the cost of her mother’s happiness. Though both her parents' household and the world around her were structured along fairly rigid patriarchal lines, we learn from the very beginning of *My Several Worlds* what it meant for Buck to grow up in between—between a home firmly
marked by Christian and American values and traditions and a surrounding world that was one-hundred percent Chinese. Between these two distinct worlds, Buck explains, the small white clean Presbyterian American world of my parents and the big loving merry not-too-clean Chinese world . . . there was no communication. . . . When I was in the Chinese world I was Chinese, I spoke Chinese and behaved as a Chinese and ate as the Chinese did, and I shared their thoughts and feelings. When I was in the American world, I shut the door between” (10).

Buck’s experience in China, it becomes clear when reading this, was very different from that of her missionary parents—and very different from the experiences abroad of the other authors I am discussing.¹⁶ Despite their many years overseas and their close contact to the Chinese, Buck’s parents kept up to their “small white clean Presbyterian world” in the middle of China. After all, being a shining example of American cultural achievements, hygiene most definitely included, was at least part of their mission. Although they allowed Chinese influences to at least partially invade their house through, for example, Buck’s Chinese amah (nanny) and tutor, the Sydenstrickers clung to their cultural roots and made it thus necessary for their children to move in and out of this little Christian-American enclave, shutting the door to surrounding China whenever they went inside.

Like most TCKs, Buck soon learned to move back and forth between these two worlds effortlessly, participating in both of them almost without restrictions. “Even

¹⁶ Buck’s difference with respect to the other authors discussed here lies predominantly in the fact that she experienced significant transculturation during her childhood years, and thus during the formation of her identity, which, as a result became culturally Chinese as well as American, while all the other authors were exposed to cultures than the American only during adulthood. And while Smith and Wright grew up in a culture that at least in certain ways was a kind of ‘mix’ between African and American culture, this culture was stable and dominated by American culture.
though I knew I was not altogether Chinese,” Buck writes about her childhood days, “I still was Chinese enough to eat sweets from the market place with impunity” (MSW 10). Being a child, Buck was able to move around in a way that adult expatriates did not want to, and also could not (for example, eating unwashed and uncooked food from the local market without getting sick). As a result of these experiences, Buck explains in My Several Worlds, “there is yet more diversity . . . within myself” (MSW 3). This internalized diversity is exactly what Pollock and Van Reken would consider Buck’s third culture. It is the result not only of a wide variety of cultural input, but also of the understanding that there are at least two radically separate perspectives on almost any given thing, in this case “the Chinese way” and “the American way.” And since both ways seemed normal and natural to the young Pearl Buck, she accepted both of them, bearing the contradictions and shifting her behaviour according to whatever was called for in the current cultural environment.

Despite her excellent dual cultural competence, however, Buck was, like most Third Culture Kids, acutely aware of her own otherness andforeignness in her host culture, of being, in her case, “pitied for my blue eyes and yellow hair” (MSW 24). Throughout her life, she insisted on the lasting effect that this early experience of marginalization and alienation had had on her, despite the happy times that she seems to have experienced in her childhood years in China. And while Karen J. Leong does have a point when she criticizes Buck’s later tendency to blindly equate her own experience of marginalization in China with that of African Americans in the U.S., because white American missionaries were a privileged and well-protected minority
Peter Conn is right, too, when he emphasizes that privilege does not necessarily do away with the psychological aspects of marginalization. “Legal entitlement,” he writes, and the protection that came with it for the Sydenstricker family, “could not conceal the universal evidence of Chinese contempt, nor did it prevent periodic outbursts of murderous violence. All of China’s white intruders knew that their presence was resented and their safety was fragile” (24).

Indeed, one of the central experiences in the life of the young Pearl Buck was the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, during which the anti-foreign, anti-imperialist, peasant-based Boxer Movement attacked foreigners—many of them missionaries—associated with the foreign domination of China. The uprising, during which about 230 foreigners and thousands of Chinese Christians were killed, first confronted the Sydenstricker family with a growing antagonism in their immediate environment, and then forced them to leave their mission and to flee to Shanghai and from there to the U.S. For Buck, who was eight years old at the time, the experience of being shunned and the fear of being killed because of her nationality, religion and race were shocking, and it did much for her evolving understanding of human sameness and equality (MSW 33-6). Despite her in several ways privileged (if also very poor) upbringing as an American missionary’s daughter, Buck thus experienced at an early age the problems and potential dangers of marginalized existence. She knew what it meant to be different from (and less accepted than) everybody else around her, and this experience did not get better whenever she found herself in the country that was supposed to be her ‘real’ home: the United States.
First of all, she did not know that country and its culture very well, a point she stressed over and over again during her first years in the United States, and that critics like Leong appear to simply not quite believe when they assert that Buck *was*, after all, an American. But relative ignorance and resulting insecurity with regards to the cultural rules of the “home” culture are typical for TCKs. Pollack and Van Reken write that “TCKs are often sadly ignorant of national, local, and even family history.” They “may know all sorts of fascinating things about other countries but little about their own” (87). As a result they are always in danger of “getting caught in an embarrassing situation because they [don't] know some everyday rule of their passport culture that is different from their host culture” (88). Having left the U.S. at the age of three months, Buck’s ignorance of the United States must have been particularly pronounced. All she knew about the cultural world of what was supposed to be her *true* home, she knew only through what was practiced in her parents' house and through the idealizing narrations of her mother.

Thus, it is not so surprising that Buck felt overwhelmed by and alien to American culture when traveling to the U.S. for the first time in 1901, following the Boxer Rebellion, and then again, in 1910, with her entry into Randolph-Macon Woman’s

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17 This argument seems to be based on the assumption that we gain knowledge, perhaps even expertise about a country simply because we carry its passport, regardless of the fact of where we actually live. On closer inspection, such a pro-nation bias seems problematic because it assumes that birth-membership in a certain national community quasi innately endows us with certain knowledges and values, obscuring the fact that these are things we all learn over time. How much can we really expect an American woman to be familiar with American culture, when up until her 18th year of her life she has spent less than one year in the country of her birth, and when even at the age of 42 this time has not increased above 6 years? The fact that her parents still lived their own idiosyncratic version of American culture certainly helped Buck (in combination with the three journeys back to the homeland) becoming a Third Culture Kid, but they could not give her an even nearly adequate competence in contemporary American culture and politics.
College in Lynchburg, Virginia. Beyond her insecurity about American cultural codes, there was the fact that she was, again, marginalized. Her American peers considered her “a freak who could speak Chinese,” she with her strange, outdated clothes made of Chinese grass linen. As a result, Peter Conn explains, the young Pearl Buck “felt continuously disoriented and displaced. She knew that China was not her home,” but the United States did not much feel like home either. “Her feeling of separation,” according to Conn, “was the central fact of her childhood, and did much to shape her adult relationships. . . . She was never quite sure where she belonged, or whether she belonged anywhere” (24-5). And how could she have felt a strong sense of belonging, when her life was structured by move after move? Like most TCKs, Buck had to deal with the unresolved grief she experienced whenever she moved from one culture into another: leaving behind her childhood home during the Boxer Rebellion, leaving behind her newly-met grandparents in West Virginia when her family decided to return to China, leaving behind her home in China again to attend college in the U.S., leaving behind her college friends, and the job she got there after graduation as a teaching assistant, when her mother fell so ill that she was forced to return to China to take care of her. Each of these departures was, or at least seemed, almost complete. In each instance, Buck had to say good-bye and leave behind not only beloved people, but also favorite places, a language and a culture that had at last become familiar.

This pattern of recurring dislocation and loss was to continue in Buck’s life as a young adult. Her marriage in 1917 to John Lossing Buck, himself a missionary to

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China, brought about another move, this time to Nanhsuchou in the rural Anhwei province, the region she later described in *The Good Earth*. Three years later, the couple moved to Nanking (Nanjing), where Buck gave birth to her only (and profoundly retarded) biological child, and also adopted the first of her altogether seven non-biological children. After a one-year stint in Ithaca, New York in 1924-25, where Buck got a master’s degree in English at Cornell University, the Buck family went again back to Nanking, until, after the so-called “Nanking Incident,” they had to leave the city in 1927, to temporarily seek refuge in Unzen, Japan. One year later, the Buck family returned to China, where they continued to live in Nanking—constantly prepared for the next potential flight—until Pearl Buck’s permanent departure from China in 1934. To develop a sense of belonging under such conditions is certainly very difficult, probably impossible. In Buck’s own words, her central problem was that she found herself living “in one world and not of it, and belong[ing] to another world and not of it” (*MSW* 51).

According to Pollock and Van Reken, such repeated and near-total losses of their life-worlds have a particularly strong effect on the developing identities of children and young adults. “For most TCKs”, they write, “the collection of significant losses and separations before the end of adolescence is . . . more than most people experience in a lifetime” (166). Such significant losses need to be grieved for. If this does not happen—and it often does not—the TCK develops other coping strategies, such

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19 The Nanking Incident occurred in March 1927, when several foreign residents of the city were robbed, injured, or killed in a turmoil that was caused by fights between troops of the Chinese Nationalists Party and the troops of the Chinese warlord Zhang Zongchang. Although Western and Japanese troops tried to stop the assault, the majority of foreign residents saw themselves forced to flee.
as, for example, denial, anger, depression, and withdrawal (176-80). Some TCKs seek
refuge in emotional detachment, trying to not build ties too closely to anybody or any
place. As a result, some become permanently restless, incapable of building lasting
relationships with any person or place even as adults. Others, we learn from Pollock
and Van Reken, do the exact opposite once they have the opportunity to choose for
themselves, selecting a place to which they will belong no matter what. This latter
seems to have been what Pearl Buck chose for herself after her permanent return to the
U.S. During the second half of her life, Buck became very much intent on building a
solid, lasting foundation for herself and her family, in material as well as in emotional
terms. Before she could make herself at home in the U.S., however, she had to en-
dure—and to initiate—even more, and more substantial, losses.

It was not only the political situation in China that made Buck consider a move
to the U.S. There were plenty of more personal, but just as pressing reasons. During
the late 1920s, Buck had been confronted with a number of significant ideological
clashes, and the agency she developed in responding to these conflicting ideological
interpellations turned out to be decisive for her future life and career. The most impor-
tant of these clashes was perhaps the one that concerned her married life as well as her
vocation as a missionary woman. After a lifetime of exposure to the self-evident
“truth” that American Christianity granted women freedoms of which the oppressed
women of patriarchal China could only dream, Buck became increasingly aware of her
own oppression as the wife of even such a relatively progressive missionary as was
her husband John Lossing Buck. In addition to this newly emerging vision of her own role as a woman, Buck was less and less convinced of the cultural, social, and spiritual benefits that Western missions claimed to be bringing to China. Too much of the professed mission did not seem to correspond to the realities Buck was able to observe in China, and the resulting ideological conflict made Buck scrutinize the foundations of the system identity of her parents, which she had accepted as ‘natural’ during her childhood. As a result of both developments, she became increasingly estranged from her husband, and gradually came to despise the fact that American missionaries in China “were free to preach a religion entirely alien to the Chinese, nay, to insist upon this religion as the only true one and to declare that those who refused to believe it would and must descend into hell” (MSW 49). She had come to the understanding that the missionary intrusions in China were, “a form of spiritual imperialism” (Conn 28), and she began to resent such one-sided conversations, in which one of the conversation partners believes he owns the truth and is thus completely closed to the standpoint of his counterpart. Nothing can of course be farther from the Gadamerian (intercultural) conversation, and Buck’s insight into the presumptuousness and closed-

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20 Peter Conn maintains that this feminist awakening in Buck (who, like Boyle, always insisted that she was not a feminist, while writing decidedly feminist texts all along), was furthered considerably by her undergraduate training at Randolph-Macon Woman’s College. By encouraging her to reconsider the relationship of gender to opportunity and achievement and by urging her to aim high,” Conn writes, “Randolph-Macon contributed significantly to Pearl’s embryonic feminism. She had grown up with a powerful father who discounted women because of their sex, and she had first-hand experience of two cultures that had almost nothing in common except their subordination of women. Although she would never completely recover from the self-doubt bred into her by such discrimination, her years at Randolph-Macon provided a glimpse of a more equitable and humane vision of relations between men and women” (51). And while Buck nevertheless tried for years to become a devote missionary wife, Conn locates the seed of her later emancipation in the conflicting ideologies she experienced while getting her bachelor’s degree at the progressive all-women’s institution.
mindedness of the missionary endeavor thus represents a pivotal moment in her
development away from being a missionary wife toward becoming a cosmopolitan.

Buck quite obviously developed a deep belief in the value of *conversation* in
the Gadamerian sense, as a means of achieving intercultural and interracial understand-
ing. In *My Several Worlds*, she remembers her childhood agony about the lack of
good-willed conversational exchange between the two worlds that she experienced as
hers, or any two given culturally different worlds. If only her Chinese tutor Mr. Kung
and her American grandfather “could meet and talk things over they would understand
each other and agree together,” Buck asserts. And the result of such clarifying conver-
sations would have been immense:

> Could such men as they have met and could they have found a common
> language, and it did not matter whether this was English or Chinese, all
> that has happened would not have happened. Pearl Harbor would never
> have been, and the atomic bomb would not have fallen” (*MSW* 49-50).

Buck not only expresses her deep belief in the value of good-willed conversation here,
but also points towards the serious consequences to which a lack of understanding and
a lack of will to communicate and collaborate can lead.\(^{21}\)

From now on, Buck would invest a good deal of her energy in public and
private conversations of all kinds. The early 1930s saw not only the publication of her

\(^{21}\) While Buck might at first glance be understood as conflating Chinese and Japanese histories here, it
is more likely that she is implying that more conversational exchange, understanding, and most of all
collaboration between America and China (an ally of the U.S. during WWII) would have kept imperial
Japan (which invaded China in the 1930s, French Indochina in 1940, and, after the American oil em-
bargo, the Dutch East Indies in 1942) in check, thus sparing the Americans both Pearl Harbor and the
moral disaster of the atomic bomb. In *What America Means to Me* (1942), Buck explicitly says, “We
have the Chinese on the same side with us, because we are fighting Japan. . . . Have we made the most
of China as an ally? No, certainly we have not. Americans must remember the shipping of war materials
to Japan, and we ought to remember the continued exclusion of Chinese from our shores and as citi-
zens; this would be a singularly appropriate moment to modify our exclusion laws against Chinese”
(14).
first novels and non-fiction books (among them *The Good Earth*), but also her first public speech on racial equality in the United States—in front of a group of African American women in Harlem—and, in 1932, a speech at a conference about missions to China. In this speech (later published as “Is There a Case for Foreign Missions?”), Buck offered a rather scathing criticism of the cultural arrogance and insensitivity of the (male) American missionary, and very deliberately distanced herself from the patriarchal and ethnocentric bias of most American missions.\(^{22}\) Instead, she championed *empathy* and *interaction* as appropriate means to deal with a foreign culture such as the Chinese, both of which of course are, as Karen Leong points out, “stereotypically feminine” forms of human relations (Leong 32).\(^{23}\) These are also decidedly cosmopolitan values, though, in their emphasis on cultural sensitivity, empathic engagement, and on conversation in the widest sense. Accordingly, Buck concluded her speech with the demand that American missionaries should stop trying to make the Chinese more American, that they should focus instead on developing a better *intercultural understanding* and a more respectful interaction with Chinese culture and Chinese individuals. As one might expect, the Presbyterian Missions Board was not enthused by Buck’s public stance. Buck, however, rejecting now her inherited system identity altogether, resisted the Board’s demands for a revision or repudiation of her statements, and requested instead to be relieved of her commission. Making the break


\(^{23}\) Robert Shaffer’s article on “Women and International Relations: Pearl S. Buck’s Critique of the Cold War” (1999) similarly stresses the fact that Buck’s view on American and world politics was a decidedly (and consciously) gendered one.
a complete one, she also asked her missionary husband for a divorce, and decided to leave China altogether. In 1934, she moved to New York City, and soon after married her publisher and long-time supporter, Richard Walsh.

At age 42, Buck certainly was a grown-up woman when she permanently moved to the U.S., but that does not mean that her experiences as a Third Culture Kid had simply slipped into the past. Quite to the contrary, they served as the foundation and centerpiece of most of her fiction and non-fiction writing during the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Her intimate knowledge of Chinese language and culture, which Buck foregrounded to the point of saying that she was Chinese (which certainly, in a TCK way, was true), her understanding of the world as a place populated by equally valuable people of different races and nationalities with differing world-views and religions, her cultural adaptability and quick empathetic ability—they all were gifts of her early childhood, gifts she could not have acquired the same way if she had gone, as her mother did, as an adult to China. They were the result of a thorough—if unwilling—transculturation, which, because it was unwilling and preceded even Buck's early childhood development, was experienced as normal and natural. Unlike her parents, who as American missionaries were too indoctrinated and too determined to truly

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24 Living in Nanking, and later in Shanghai during the late 1910s and 1920s, Buck was, as we learn from both her autobiography and Peter Conn’s biography, not only acquainted with rural life and traditional Chinese culture, she also was very much in the middle of the new emerging forces in China. Conn writes that Buck was “an avid reader of Chinese novels” and that “she numbered among her friends and students some of the men who were trying as she said, ‘to create the new China.’ She was among the few Westerners who read the arguments of Ch’en Tu-hsiu and Hu Shih as they appeared in *New Youth*” (74). Thus immersed in the events before, around and after May 4, 1919—which marked the rise of Chinese nationalism—Buck had, because of her TCK upbringing, as Conn writes, “a privileged vantage point . . . she knew the Chinese language and a good deal of China’s classic literature, she had lived in the country most of her life, and she had access to some of the people who were making the new culture” (75).
listen to the Chinese Other, the young Buck, moving back and forth between worlds, had her ears open for Chinese points of views as well as for those of her parents. Similarly, she listened to the (moderately feminist) viewpoints presented to her at Randolph-Macon Women’s College. And at some point these colliding discourses seem to have produced something in her which I have, with recourse to the work of Paul Smith, called *cosmopolitan agency*. 

If we understand, as I have done, Buck’s moment(s) of recognition and drastic reorientation as the (long-term) result of the ideological interpellations she experienced during her TCK childhood, we quickly notice continuities between her emerging cosmopolitanism and that of William Gardner Smith and of Boyle and Wright. After all, all of these authors seem to have developed their cosmopolitan attitudes as the result of intense emotional involvement in moments of ideological interpellation. Similarly, all of them have foregrounded in their writings the emotions as catalysts for cosmopolitan acts by their protagonists, and have also used emotional appeals (be they positive and pleasant or negative and shocking) as a means to reach and change the minds of their readers. Kay Boyle, we might remember, even consciously put her reputation as a modernist author at risk (and lost it), because she used sentimental appeals to reach the American masses and thus change public opinion. Her highly

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25 Paul Smith has, in *Discerning the Subject*, provided us with a theory of how human agency might arise as “a veritable product of ideological interpellation” (xxxi). Understanding agency as “a form of subjectivity where, by virtue of the contradictions and disturbances in and among subject-positions, the possibility (indeed, the actuality) of resistance to ideological pressure is allowed for,” Smith insists that it is only in moments of such contradictions and disturbances that agency can arise (xxxv). In my chapter on William Gardner Smith, I have attempted to show that emotional engagement plays a crucial role in the kind and quality of agency that is produced. The higher the emotional involvement, the more likely is the kind of resistance to ideological pressures that Paul Smith predicts.
political but also deeply sentimental novels of the 1940s may have lost her literary reputation, but they represented a decisively cosmopolitan engagement with the world around her. Given that Buck, like Boyle, was disparaged by modernist writers and critics for her sentimental writing style, and given that she, too, had a strong political and humanitarian agenda and the publicly expressed determination to reach the American masses, it should be interesting to investigate to what extent she consciously and deliberately used sentimental techniques to communicate her cosmopolitan appeals to the reader. Another interesting question in this context is whether her TCK-background put Buck in a different aesthetic position from that of the other writers investigated here. As we will see in the following, this was indeed the case, since, for example, what we generally consider Buck’s sentimental writing style clearly draws on both Anglo-American and Chinese literary traditions, which merged and mingled in Buck’s personal ‘third culture’ to produce her own, somewhat idiosyncratic style.

Pearl Buck’s Novels and the Ambiguities of Transnational Sentiment

The overwhelming majority of the texts that Pearl Buck published and/or wrote during the 1930s concentrate on China. Moving back and forth between China, the U.S. and Japan in the late 1920s and early 1930s, she wrote the manuscripts for *The Good Earth* and three other novels, *East Wind, West Wind* (1930), *Sons* (1932), and *The Mother* (1933). But even after she moved to the U.S. for good in 1934, she kept writing novels set in her former home as well as chronicles of her parents’ lives in China and a text on *The Chinese Novel* (1939). In addition, she published a short story
collection and translated the Chinese 14th-century classic *All Men Are Brothers* by Shui Hun Chuan into English (1937). If the subject matter of Buck’s books throughout the 1930s was thus predominantly related to China, her professed intention was to actively influence the American/Western view of China, so that it would more adequately reflect what she understood as the “real” China and the “real” Chinese people. In *My Several Worlds*, she even speaks of her ‘missionary impulse’ to inform Americans about Asia (MSW 371), an impulse that literary critic David D. Buck (not related to Pearl Buck) sees as the driving force in Buck’s work of the 1930s and 40s. Despite this urge to communicate a more realistic image of China to the West, Buck’s style in nearly all of her novels and biographies was categorized as ‘sentimental’ by her American contemporaries as well as by many later critics. As such, it seemed a holdover from the 18th and 19th centuries, not only unrealistic, but, from the vantage-point of high modernism, also effeminate, trite, and hopelessly old-fashioned. Worse still,

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27 In her 1930 review for the *New Republic*, Isidore Schneider, calls Buck’s first novel *East Wind: West Wind*, an “ordinary, quite mechanical novel, full of plot and sentiment, but empty of any lifeliness in its characters or significance in its thesis—the clash between modern and traditional China.” Isidore Schneider, Review of *East Wind: West Wind* by Pearl Buck. *New Republic* 63 (May 21, 1930): 24. Mary McGrory, reviewing *Pavilion of Women* for *The New York Times Book Review* in 1946, wrote that “the novel is a searching, adult study of women written with high seriousness and sympathy, which should find a multitude of women readers.” Mary McGrory, “Review of *Pavilion of Women*.” *The New York Times Book Review*. November 24, 1946: 6. These two reviews can be considered symptomatic for the way that reviewers—even the more sympathetic ones—tended to see Buck’s novels.

from the modernist perspective, was the fact that such writing attracted a (mostly female) mass audience.

There were probably several reasons for Buck’s particular choice of style. One of them might indeed be related to a certain time-delay and resulting ‘old-fashioned-ness’ in relation to concurrent American and/or Western culture. On the American side, Buck’s cultural mold was, after all, not only shaped by the missionary fervor of her parents, it also, as Dody W. Thompson puts it, was “irrevocably set a generation behind what would have been her ‘normal’ one” (89)29. Growing up in rural China, Buck “missed out” on the existential agony and the cultural and aesthetic dissatisfaction and iconoclasm that suffused the American cultural air of the 1920s, and which, according to Malcolm Cowley and Gertrude Stein,30 formed the “Lost Generation” of Buck’s literary contemporaries. And although Buck experienced her own share of social unrest and even mortal danger during her childhood years in China, she had been taught by her missionary parents to deal with problems “optimistically”—a habit that in modernist circles earned her the reputation of feminine ignorance and naïveté. Similarly, Buck’s often didactic style, a particularly offensive trait in the eyes of her Western critics, can be at least partially traced to her upbringing in a missionary family.

Another crucial factor in Buck’s literary style was her exposure to the Chinese novel, a genre she knew well enough to write a book about and make the topic of her Nobel Prize acceptance speech. In this speech, she emphasized that she saw herself as

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“born and reared as a writer” in the tradition of the Chinese novel (338). And, as Kang Liao explains in his monograph on Buck, the Chinese literary traditions she inherited “favor fast-moving action, simplicity of style and vocabulary, and characterization by the character’s own action and words rather than by the author’s explanation. The point of view is always the omniscient third, which [Buck] constantly used in her fiction” (36). Buck’s realism, Liao declares, “is Victorian and . . . affected by the Chinese storytelling tradition” (37). A second important stylistic influence on Buck’s writing was the 19th–century sentimental novel, which is, as Joanne Dobson puts it, characterized by “an emphasis on accessible language, a clear prose style, and familiar lyric and narrative patterns” (268). Literary sentimentalism, according to Dobson, “is premised on an emotional and philosophical ethos that celebrates human connection, both personal and communal” (266); its emphasis lies on transparency, “generated by a valorization of connection, [and] an impulse toward communication with as wide an audience as possible” (268).32

Reaching as wide an audience as possible was certainly one of Pearl Buck’s primary concerns. In her Nobel Prize lecture, she stated that “like [the] Chinese novelists, I have been taught to write for [the] people. If they are reading their magazines by the million, then I want my stories there rather than in magazines read only by a few. A novelist . . . must be satisfied if the common people hear him gladly” (Nobel

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Lectures 339). Her championing of emotions Buck understood as another legacy of her cross-cultural upbringing in China. “Life in China and with the Chinese,” she writes, “ha[s] taught me much about human beings. . . . To know how a person feels was to my Chinese friends more important than anything else about him, for until one knows how another feels no friendship can be established nor even business carried on with mutual benefit” (370). In order to be friends with a person, Buck here declares (following the lessons she felt she had learned from her Chinese teachers), one must relate to that person’s feelings, and even business relations cannot be properly conducted—that is with mutual benefit—without such relation. Thought through to its logical conclusion, this suggests that Gadamer’s good-willed conversation—which is circumscribed by both conversation partners’ willingness to approach their counterpart with an open, flexible and sympathetic mind—is not truly possible if the interlocutors do not relate on the basis of their feelings. Emotions thus are seen, by Buck, as key to human understanding in general, and to intercultural, cosmopolitan, understanding in particular. As she further explains in My Several Worlds, she “applied” her Chinese

33 Buck’s emphasizing, in her Nobel lecture, that she would have her stories rather published in magazines “read by the million” than in “magazines read only by a few” seems a quite obvious side blow to those modernists contemporaries who preferred to publish their pieces in small journals (many of them located in Paris) like transition or This Quarter, which were predominantly read by other modernist artists and critics. Buck’s concern for the masses was clearly influenced by the aesthetic of China’s New Culture Movement, to which she had been exposed during her final years in China. Scholars often locate the origins of the New Culture Movement in 1915, when Peking University professor Chen Duxiu founded the New Youth journal. The movement was partially influenced by Western philosophical ideas (most prominently American pragmatism) and promoted individual freedom, science, democracy, the emancipation of women, and the introduction of Vernacular Chinese. The latter was meant to allow people with very little education to read articles and books. Influential intellectuals and writers of the time include Mao Dun, Lao She, Lu Xun and Bing Xin. Buck’s emphasis on writing for the masses was also directly connected, however, with her dedication to intercultural understanding. In My Several Worlds she emphasizes repeatedly that she wrote books with the intention of promoting understanding between the East and the West. This, she writes, was what she could do to help her countrymen “to know something of the lives and thoughts of the peoples with whom they must inevitably deal, either as friends or enemies, in the future and that very near” (MSW 371).
“education” about the importance of feelings to her American compatriots. She did so by first finding out how they felt about the Chinese (or other foreign nationals), and then trying to change these feelings—and by extension their thoughts—by engaging them in the fate of fictional foreign ‘friends’ in her sentimental novels.

Buck thus derived her populist, sentimental aesthetic in TCK-manner from both Anglo-American and Chinese traditions, and she very deliberately used it because she thought it effective for her purposes. The central premise of sentimentalism, after all, as Glenn Hendler reminds us in his 2001 *Public Sentiments*, is “the idea that, through the mediation of textualized sympathy, feelings and experiences can be communicated from one embodied subject to another” (12). Buck certainly subscribed to this premise. She wanted to make Americans familiar with the everyday thoughts and feelings of people from another culture, and she deeply believed that a compassionate portrayal of these people would evoke sympathy in the reader which would help could transcend racial and cultural as well as national borders. This idea of empathetic understanding across racial and national boundaries through literary and non-literary texts resonates, of course, in interesting ways with those recent treatments of cosmopolitanism that either implicitly or explicitly acknowledge the importance of emotions and imagination in the development of cosmopolitan solidarities.

As I mentioned in the introduction, former MLA President Domna Stanton has described the “imaginative engagement” through novels, as essential for intercultural understanding in a globalized world. Martha Nussbaum has similarly argued, in *Cultivating Humanity* (1997), that what the prospective world citizen must develop is “a
sympathetic understanding of distant cultures and of ethnic, racial, and religious minorities within her own (69).” If we also accept Nussbaum’s argument in *Upheavals of Thought*, that emotions are “essential elements of human intelligence” (2), and as such are always impinging upon even ostensibly calculated value judgments, and if we thus understand emotions as an integral part of the way we think about things, we do assume that fundamental changes in the structures of our emotions are likely to lead to fundamental changes in our value systems. And as I have argued in chapter 2, only such changes in our value systems can transform our attitudes towards non-citizens and other strangers—and the political decisions that are influenced by our ethics. Cosmopolitanism, that is, is not at all the monster of abstraction some of its critics fear—rather than a universal concept, bled dry of human emotion, it is an expansive emotional particularity, a mode of feeling as thinking that is constantly broadening itself.

Consequently, Buck addressed her readers’ thinking on the levels of both rational insight and emotional understanding. Grabbing her audience on both sides of the cognitive spectrum, she appealed to their ratiocination by filling them with factual information about a more or less unknown culture (this she did also, of course in her many articles and non-fiction books), and stirred up their emotions by building sentimental imaginative worlds filled with foreign characters that American readers could love and thus relate to and care for. Furthermore, Buck used the imaginative power of her stories to promote her understanding of human equality and sameness across the boundaries of race, religion, and nationality. Her sentimental novels *The Promise* (1942), *China Sky* (1943), *Pavilion of Women* (1948), *The Hidden Flower* (1952), and
Come, My Beloved (1953)—to name a few—all feature love relationships between characters of different race, citizenship, or religion (one of them often being American), and ask their reader to feel with the suffering lovers. And in case he or she has not understood quite yet, all of these books offer rather direct moral appeals targeted at the more rational capacities of their audience.

The Hidden Flower, for example—subtitled “A challenging novel of interracial love”—tells the story of the American occupation officer Allen Kennedy and the Japanese girl Josui Satai. Their interracial relationship presents a challenge to and is threatened by the racist attitudes of both of their families, with whom readers are expected to partially identify and whose positions must be transcended by the novel’s end. While the couple still lives in Japan, the deeply ingrained anti-Americanism of Josui’s father makes interaction between him and Allen difficult, verging on impossible. The lovers nevertheless marry in a Buddhist temple, planning to continue their life thereafter in the United States (where Josui was born and where she lived for several years until her family returned to Japan). There, they expect less opposition to their union, especially since Josui is well familiar with American culture and speaks the language perfectly. But when Allen brings his young bride ‘home’ to Virginia, he soon has to learn that his own parents do not see things more liberal—a fact that challenges his very conception of the freedoms of the country he has been serving. Indeed, his mother will not even admit his wife into their home, considering the mixed-race relationship a disgrace to the family. When Allen’s father asks her to be a
little more tolerant and generous, because, after all, the two are married, she positions her intolerance as duty:

“They are not married,” she declared crisply. . . .
“Sugar, why do you say that again? You know I told you that a temple is just the same thing as a church —”
“I don’t care about the temple. . . . It doesn’t matter what I think or what you think. It’s the law. The law of this state forbids marriage between the white and colored races.”
She faced him and compelled his answering stare.
“Josephine!” he said loudly, “you know that law was made against the niggra!”
“It’s the law,” she repeated. (161-62).

When Allen’s father, soon after, goes to meet the young couple, he has found out through his lawyer that his wife is right: Allen’s marriage to Josui is illegal under the laws of Virginia, irrespective of the fact that the girl is, as he notices with astonishment and relief, “so obviously not colored” (162). He is immediately enchanted by Josui’s tender beauty and her quiet, submissive behavior. Fascinated, he looks at her “cream-white skin” and her “great dark eyes . . . humid with fear” (162). Noticing that the “child,” as he calls her, is “anxious to please, pleading to be understood,” the older man’s heart melts, and “all his pity, ready and trembling, rushed toward her” (162). She is, it seems, not so Other as had been feared.

Buck’s employment of and partial challenges to stereotypical gender roles in *The Hidden Flower* is quite interesting. While in Japan it is Josui’s patriarchal father who makes the young couple’s love impossible, in the U.S. it is Allen’s racist and obstinate mother who constitutes the biggest obstacle to mutuality and happiness. Allen’s father, on the contrary, is shown to be much more tolerant and accepting; he even displays purportedly feminine—and sentimental—reactions, with his “ready and
trembling” pity “rush[ing] towards” the Japanese girl. Even in his compassion, however, Allen’s father is shown to be caught in the logic of both patriarchy and white supremacy, as he keeps treating both his wife and Josui as ‘poor children’ and cannot help but belittle the wife of his son as “a little bit of a thing” and a “little creature” (162, 164). Buck very clearly controls and fine-tunes this more benevolently discriminating attitude of Mr. Kennedy, showing thus the different shades and degrees of American racism and gender oppression. When Josui is shocked to learn that also in America they are facing racist opposition to their interracial marriage, Allen sneers:

“Oh, yes, in America, my love! Especially in America! Had you forgotten? You were in Los Angeles until you were a big girl. Don’t you remember?” His tone was bitter.

She did remember. She let her head droop and tears hung on her straight lashes. “I thought it was changed,” she whispered.

“Changing, perhaps,” he admitted. “I am part of the change, so are you.”

She lifted her head at this, and met his eyes fearfully.

“This makes me feel lonely,” she said in a small voice.

“Two wandering stars,” he agreed, “seeking to make a universe of their own. It can be done, Pittysing.” (169).

Like “wandering stars,” Buck has Allen explain here, the two lovers must accept being outsiders wherever they go, while also working toward a “universe” where an international, interracial relationship like theirs will be no longer a problem, but rather a paradigm. Allen finds, however, that the social pressure against him and his ‘illegal’ wife is hard to endure on a continuing basis; as a result, he grows more and more distant from Josui, abandoning her emotionally. When Josui learns that she is pregnant, she decides not to burden him additionally with a biracial child. Instead, she leaves him without telling him about her pregnancy, and puts the baby up for adoption. Providing an unexpected kind of happy-ending to her tale, Buck has an older
Jewish woman—a Holocaust refugee who has “never kissed a man” (219)—adopt the little boy. Not only is she a doctor, she is a cosmopolitan, too, with a great heart for all the children in the world. Looking at her adopted son, she “thought suddenly of little dead babies, starved, killed, bayoneted, tossed into heaps, babies who died because of what their parents were: Jews, Catholics, rebels, the hated, the feared, the despised. . . . Along all who were lost, this child she had saved” (234). It is not hard to imagine that such—deeply sentimental—formulations went straight to the heart of the millions of American mothers who read them.

At Buck’s time of writing, marriages between whites and non-whites were still outlawed in 20 American states. She uses the narrative strategies of the melodrama to put forward her sharp critique of the racist ideology expressed in these laws, as well as against racism in Japan, Germany and elsewhere; all this, she combines with a passionate plea for international and interracial adoption, one of her many social projects at the time. In order to get her political message across, Buck does not hesitate to reduce her major characters to what Peter Conn calls “allegorical signposts.” The victims in the story (most of all Josui and her son), in Conn’s words, “are virtuous, the bigots are relentlessly wicked, and the plot marches inevitably to a sad but morally uplifting conclusion” (329). Buck knew well enough that such writing would hit home with the kind of audience she was hoping to reach: middle-class American women.

In 1949 Buck and Walsh founded Welcome House, the first international, interracial adoption agency in the United States. Buck’s goal with this agency was to find adoptive families for bi-racial children (in the beginning predominantly the children of Asian mothers and American GI-fathers) that were considered unadoptable because of their ethnic status. She laid out her argument for such adoptions also in non-fictional form in *Children for Adoption* (1964).

It should not be denied, though, that her strong political and humanitarian agenda often also significantly weakened Buck’s novels aesthetically. Kang Liao suggests (in his generally very positive cri-
Elizabeth Janeway, writing a review on *The Hidden Flower* for the *New York Times Book Review*, emphasizes that these middle-class women, called ‘idiots’ by journalist and essayist H.L. Mencken, were actually quite important for political change in the U.S. \(^{36}\) “If our mores are changing in the direction of tolerance,” she writes, “if our knowledge of the world is broadening, it is she [the middle class woman] who is accepting the change. It is vital to communicate with this woman.”\(^{37}\) And communicate Buck did. *The Hidden Flower* became, as so many of her novels, a bestseller, soon to be republished in condensed form by *Reader’s Digest*, the best-selling consumer magazine in the U.S.

Buck did not rely on novelistic treatments alone, however, to change what she considered the ignorance and deeply ingrained racism of the average America. She declared in a 1942 letter to Edward Carter, at the time director of the American Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR), that she was perfectly happy “to get down to the level of the comic strip.”\(^{38}\) Complex and highly sophisticated discussions of American-Asian relations, such as those provided by Carter’s institute, Buck declared, were not suited to reach the broad masses of the United States. “I want,” she further writes in her

\(^{36}\) One should of course not forget, in this context, that white middle-class women also played a significant role in the abolition of slavery in the U.S. and that Harriet Beecher Stowe’s sentimental novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was credited with influencing these important political processes by no less a personage than Abraham Lincoln.


\(^{38}\) Pearl Buck to Edward Carter, February, 3, 1942, Institute of Pacific Relations Papers, Butler Library, Columbia University.
letter, “somehow to get down into the level of people who don’t and won’t listen to
your programs and books. . . [T]he sort of people I want to interest, and who I believe
must be interested—simply cannot and will not be interested by the sort of thing you
do.” In order to reach that goal, Buck was willing to quite literally “get down to the
level of the comic strip.” During the mid-1940s, Buck’s East and West Association
used a comic strip series entitled “Johnny Everyman” to provide average Americans
with some cosmopolitan perspective. The main character of the comic strip is an Ame-
rican engineer who travels the world, and, in the process, not only learns to understand
and appreciate the culture of other countries and people, but also fights racial and
national prejudice wherever he finds it. The Johnny Everyman series appeared in two
mass-market quarterly comic magazines—World’s Finest Comics and Comic Caval-
cade—which, as historian Robert Shaffer informs us, “had combined sales of over one
million copies” (2003, 19). In addition, Buck’s East and West Association “also
printed hundreds of thousands of copies of these comic strip series on its own for use
by school districts” (Shaffer 2003, 19). Institutions such as the American Institute of
Pacific Relations, in Buck’s eyes, were genuinely important for the research work they
did. But in order to communicate their findings to the American ‘everyman,’ one had
to pack them into a form he was willing and able to accept. And if that had to be the
form of the comic strip, she had no problem with it.

Buck’s approach was thus indeed, as literary theorist Mari Yoshihara points
out, consistently populist (168), in both her fictional and non-fictional writing. “She

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39 Robert Shaffer. “Pearl S. Buck and the East and West Association: The Trajectory and Fate of
40 Most of the initial stories in World’s Finest were written by Jack Schiff, with art by John Daly.
was,” Yoshihara writes, and “opted to remain a ‘popular’ expert on China,” who chose every populist media possible to transport her messages about human equality and intercultural understanding (168). If Buck’s East and West Association supported the publication of comic strips, the Nobel and Pulitzer laureate also did not shy away from publishing many of her novels in serial form in popular women’s magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* and *The Women’s Home Companion*—where they could be read by people who would not buy or could not afford books—or from commissioning elucidating illustrations as accompaniment to the stories.41 Similarly, while she regularly contributed to highly respected outlets such as *Foreign Affairs* and the *New York Times Magazine*, Buck also quite happily argued for racial equality and world citizenship in *Better Homes and Gardens* or *Marriage and Family Living*.42

Overall, her populist appeals to the thoughts, emotions, and imagination of her audience had quite significant real-life effects. As historian Robert Shaffer attests, it has by now been acknowledged by many historians that “American sympathy for China in World War II stemmed in part from the runaway success of *The Good Earth*,

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41 Among the novels that Buck published in serialized form—usually in the same year in which the novel was also published as a hardcover book—are *Sons*, Serial in *Cosmopolitan*, 1932; *East Wind: West Wind*, Serial in *Asia* and *Collier’s*, 1930; *Now And Forever*, Serial In *Woman’s Home Companion*, Oct-Dec, 1936; *This Proud Heart*, Serial in *Good Housekeeping*: September-December, 1937, and January-February, 1938; *China Sky*, Serial in *Collier’s*: February-April, 1941; “China Gold,” Serial in *Collier’s*: February 7-April 18, 1942; *The Promise*, Serial in *Asia*: November, 1942-October, 1943; *Pavilion of Women*, Serial in *Woman’s Home Companion*: August-November, 1946; *Peony*, Condensed version in *Cosmopolitan*, 1948; *God’s Men*, Serial in *Woman’s Home Companion*: February-April, 1951; *The Hidden Flower*, Serial in *Woman’s Home Companion*: March-May, 1952; *Sylvia*. Published as a serial in *Redbook* in 1951 with the title “No Time for Love.” Published as a book in Japanese only. Some of Buck’s novels were published with illustrations as serials in *Asia* magazine, owned by Buck and her husband Richard Walsh.

which provided a very human portrait of the Chinese peasantry” (2003, 2). Buck’s influence on the American public with regards to other domestic and international questions—especially in the context of race relations—has been similarly strong. W.E.B. Du Bois, for example, recognized and appreciated Buck’s work in his 1942 “The War for Race Equality,” and Langston Hughes called Buck, with a somewhat double-edged amiability, the “current Harriet Beecher Stowe of the race” (259). The result of Buck’s consistently populist approach was also, however, that her perceived authority on social and political issues was at times higher than that of the dedicated ‘experts.’ Over the years, she spoke out on an extremely broad range of social, cultural and political topics, and she managed to garner recognition as an authority on many of them. Within the U.S., she was an ardent advocate on the behalf of American minorities. Not only did she support the African American civil rights struggle, she also did what she could to bring about the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act, and

The Good Earth, of course, is a naturalist much more than a sentimental novel. Nevertheless, in its sympathetic depiction of the life of poor peasants, and especially the fate of women, the novel appealed to the compassion and sympathetic understanding of its audience.


Robert Shaffer quotes “one Chicago woman,” who was so impressed with one of Buck’s speeches that she sent a telegram to no less an authority than President Harry S. Truman, which read: “Pearl Buck addressed 2,000 here tonight. Her message is tremendous. She understands the Orient and their leaders. I beg you to request her to come to see you and address your Cabinet members at once” (quoted in Shaffer 1999, 155). The American government occasionally indeed did make use of Buck’s texts. As Karen Leong tells us, “government officials could ignore neither Buck’s status as a China authority nor her prolific output of commentary. Chester Kerr, the chief of the Office of War Information’s Book Division, considered [Buck’s non-fiction book] American Unity and Asia so important that he circulated a report throughout government offices suggesting it to others” (50).

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was an American federal law that served (very much like the exclusion acts for South Asians in 1917, Japanese and Koreans in 1924, and Filipinos in 1934) to bar Chinese immigrants from the political sphere of the United States. Following large scale immigration of Chinese and other Asians to the U.S. (especially California) in the 19th century (working mostly in mining and in the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad), a declining economy triggered strong anti-Chinese sentiments which led, in 1882, to the Chinese Exclusion Act. The Act excluded both “skilled and unskilled” Chinese laborers, as well as “Chinese employed in mining” from entering the U.S. for the period of ten years, and also affected Chinese who were already in the U.S., who were, for
protested publicly against the internment of Japanese in the U.S. during WWII.\(^{47}\) Her high visibility in such arenas, however, has formed a cogent part of the critique of Buck by, especially, critics of Asian and Asian American background, such as Karen Leong. While acknowledging Buck’s sincere political and social engagement, Leong argues that Buck’s prominent presence tended to silence the very communities she meant to speak for.\(^{48}\) Other theorists point to the danger inherent in specifically sentimental novels: the danger of becoming (often unwilling) accomplices to the imperialist endeavor of Western nations. After all, the well-intended boiling down of complex issues into a simple story risks certain kinds of distortion. If a sentimental writer is committed, for example, to showing her American readers that Chinese peasants are humans \textit{just like} Americans and can thus be related to, this might lead to the creation of a Chinese character that actually comes across as a lot more American than Chinese. What we may end up with is a text that perhaps indeed succeeds in encouraging Americans to relate to Chinese, but only at the cost of de-naturing the Other, of rendering the Chinese themselves as American.

\(^{47}\) After the attack on Pearl Harbor, approximately 120,000 Japanese, Japanese Americans, Chinese-Japanese Americans, Korean-Americans considered to have Japanese nationality, Japanese-Hawaiians, and Japanese Latin Americans were arrested on order of the American government and put into internment camps called “War Relocation Centers” on the West Coast. Only in December 1944 did the Supreme Court rule the detainment unconstitutional, and did the government begin clearing the camps. Many of the internees, however, suffered, in spite of the 1948 American Japanese Claims Act, significant property losses.

\(^{48}\) Buck, in Leong’s view, “occupied what little political space was afforded to minorities—particularly Chinese Americans—in the American public discourse of identity” (51).
This line of argument has repeatedly been forwarded by scholars of race and imperialism, who, as Glenn Hendler points out in *Public Sentiments* (2001), tend to see “the politics of sympathy [as] fatally flawed by its drive to turn all differences into equivalences, all analogies into coincidences. . . . If I have to be like you and feel like you in order for you to feel for me, sympathy reaches its limits at the moment you are reminded that I am not quite like you” (7). 49 Given that cosmopolitanism has been charged with similarly colonizing tendencies, as I have observed in chapter 2, it seems one has to proceed with extra caution when using sentimentalism to support genuinely (and not just apparently) cosmopolitan agendas. 50 Both sentimentalism and cosmopolitanism are, after all, only valuable when they allow for both equality and difference, instead of confusing compassionate solidarity with a “saming” and colonizing of the Other. Otherwise, they subscribe to the kind of universalism that, as historian David Hollinger puts it, “conflates the local with the universal” (1993, 318). 51 The interesting question, then, is whether Buck did allow for difference or if she instead tended to distortion in her sentimental approaches to the Other. And here, it is of the utmost impor-

49 Question like these have been exactly the topic of the rather lively discourse around the sentimental novel in recent years. On one side of the spectrum, we find defenses of the sentimental novel, such as those forwarded, for example, by Jane Tompkins, who discusses the value and political power of a novel like Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, or by Suzanne Clark, who finds similar political potential in the books of a number of 20th-century writers, among them Kay Boyle. On the other side, we find theorists, many of them scholars of race and imperialism, who charge sentimentalism with colonizing tendencies. Theorists who belongs to this second group are, for example, collected in Shirley Samuel’s essay collection *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America* (1992). Another example would be James Thomson’s *Sentimental Imperialists: The American Experience in East Asia* (1981).

50 In the cosmopolitan endeavour, self-righteous, Eurocentric, and colonizing tendencies go back at least to Kant’s essay on “Perpetual Peace,” in which he makes clear that there are some who benevolently include and some who will gratefully accept their inclusion in the cosmopolitan project.

51 David Hollinger gives as example the instance when “in the name of a mystical humanity, the prophetic Hoosier Wendell Willkie proclaimed One World in which farmers near Kiev deserved our sympathy and respect because they were just like farmers near Kokomo, Indiana” (1993, 318, my emphasis).
tance that we do not forget that the particular Other in question was not, for Buck, simply other. Rather, the Other of Chinese culture was as much a part of herself as the Other of American culture. She was not, it cannot be emphasized enough, writing simply from an American standpoint, but rather from a hybridized, TCK standpoint.

Despite her transcultural position, however, critics of Asian and Asian American literature have taken Buck to task for her depictions of Chinese people and Asians in general, discussing Buck’s complicated relationship with American Orientalism. American Orientalism, Karen Leong explains in *The China Mystique* (2005), draws on European Orientalism—the imperialist imagining “of Asia’s cultures through the lens of European values, norms and culture”—in order “to affirm the political, social, and cultural superiority of the United States” (2). Asian people, in this Orientalist paradigm, tended to be imagined as exotic, feminine, and timeless. One of Pearl Buck’s self-assigned tasks was of course exactly to change this American Orientalist imagination of China. Rather than a strange, mysterious, far-away and timeless place, she wanted Americans to envision something that would be more adequate to China as she had experienced it. However, Leong charges Buck with unwillingly helping create a new kind of Orientalism. “Buck’s ability to reorient Americans toward a more positive assessment of China without fully rejecting Orientalism,” Leong argues, actually “facilitated American’s embrace of a different kind of Orientalism, an image of China as no longer alien and distant, but instead as romanticized, progressive, and highly gendered” (1). This new Orientalism, which Leong calls the *china mystique*, continued to support American imperialism and expansion just as much as the old version that
Buck had battled so fervently. Furthermore, while she does recognize Buck’s substantial intellectual development from missionary wife to cultural ambassador, and her “acute ability to assume multiple perspectives” (55), Leong not only takes her to task for her residual Orientalism, but also sharply criticizes the fact that, in order to bolster her own reputation as a China expert, Buck created a ‘persona’ of “someone who was more Chinese than American” (23). For Leong, such “cultural passing” created a “dilemma of authenticity” and, as such, is evidence of “Buck’s inability to see her limitations as a foreign-born white woman” (52).52

Leong’s emphasis on the only partial efficacy of Buck's efforts at change is crucial, reminding us of the self-resistance of even good-faith activism on the part of the privileged. It is quite interesting, however, that she also stresses so much, here and elsewhere, that Buck was born in America—as though the first three months of her life could have made much of a cultural impression on the infant. It seems infinitely more important that Buck was raised by American parents in China—missionaries, at that—than that her actual birthplace was in the U.S. (apart from citizenship issues, of course, and the significant but secondary identity-related questions that arise from that for the holders of passports of privilege). But Leong insists on Buck’s “true” Americanness, and this criticism is in some ways similar to the one that Buck heard for decades from the other side of the Pacific: That, as a white Western woman, she could not possibly

52 Mari Yoshihara partially agrees with Leong’s critical standpoint when she notes, in Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism (2003), that Buck’s position vis-a-vis China was, because of her transcultural upbringing, a complex one. “While Buck considered herself a friend of the Chinese people and distinguished herself from the notions of racial and cultural supremacy commonly held by missionaries in China,” Yoshihara writes “her authority was nonetheless embedded in and emerged out of the unequal power relations between the West and China” (154).
communicate an *authentic* image of China, no matter how long she had lived there.\(^{53}\)

While I do not want to dismiss Leong’s important critique of Buck, I want to reach back to the first section of this chapter and question the adequacy of the idea of ‘authenticity’ as it is used and implied in Leong’s text. I certainly do not want to deny that Buck wrote quite a few mediocre and weak books set in Asia, and that her picture of China was always inflected and sometimes distorted by her own transcultural situatedness. But I want to suggest that an insistence on her lack of Chinese ‘authenticity’ misses the mark. First of all, as Kang Liao rightly points out, “great books about China and Chinese people do not have to be written only by the Chinese” (135), and it is not in the least guaranteed that an ‘authentic’ Chinese writer would write a better book about any given historical situation than a non- or only partially Chinese writer (‘partially’ here referring to acculturation, not to a mixture of bloodlines). In this context, it is interesting to note that Buck’s work is currently experiencing something of a resurgence among Asian scholars, who are finding it more interesting than the reputation it

\(^{53}\) Buck’s choice to ignore the upper and middle social strata of Chinese society in *The Good Earth*, and to concentrate instead poor peasants and on people who have fallen into despair, was very much counter to Chinese novelistic practice at the time, and thus brought her the ire of many contemporary Chinese critics. Kiang Kang-Hu, for example, at the time head of the Chinese Studies Department at McGill University in Montreal and a renowned critic, criticized Buck in his 1932 critical review of *The Good Earth* for selectively revealing “a particular phase of the darker side of Chinese life” (370). He attributed what he considered an inaccurate portrayal of Chinese society to Buck’s dependence on the accounts of Chinese ‘coolies’ and ‘amahs,’ because she herself, so he believed, was not able to read original texts of Chinese classical literature. Kiang Kang-Hu “Critical Excerpts,” in Pearl Buck, *The Good Earth*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1994, pp. 370. Buck, however, did not leave such criticism unanswered. In a 1933 piece, she writes that she is “less interested in tradition than in actuality. . . . [Chinese intellectuals] want the Chinese people represented by the little handful of her intellectuals, and they want the vast, rich, somber, joyous Chinese life represented solely by literature that is ancient and classic. . . . The cleavage between the common people and the intellectuals in China is portentous, a gulf that seems impassable. I have lived with the common people, and for the past fifteen years I have lived among the intellectuals, and I know whereof I speak. Pearl Buck “Critical Excerpts,” in Pearl Buck, *The Good Earth*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1994, pp. 372. Note, here, alongside the biblical register, the identification of trends and disparities that would later become tragically evident to the world, during Chairman Mao’s Cultural Revolution.
has for so many decades borne had suggested. Secondly, I do not think it is helpful to consider Buck as someone who consciously and fraudulently claimed a Chinese identity to further her career as a writer and spokesperson. Rather, I believe, we should see her as the hybrid person that she was, culturally. Buck indeed was neither fully Chinese nor fully American. Hers was a third, much more private culture, and the result was that she was unable to think about or ever feel anything in a completely American or completely Chinese way.

This suggested adjustment of Leong’s critique, however, does not challenge her claim that, despite (or because of) her well-intended cosmopolitan engagement, Buck unwittingly helped support the American imperialist project—as self-proclaimed educator and liberator of the world. Reading especially Buck’s non-fiction texts of the 1940s and 50s, one is amazed at the fervor of Buck’s American patriotism and her deep belief in American exceptionalism, both of which Leong ascribes to her residual Orientalism. While she rejected nationalism, Buck—after living for a few years in the U.S.—turned out to be a vehement believer in the cosmopolitan potential of American society, and in the almost ‘natural’ role of the U.S. as a (moral) world leader. These beliefs she expressed unambiguously and unashfully in countless articles, books and speeches. That is not to say, of course, that she was not critical of American domestic and foreign policy. In fact, nothing in the world made her more angry than the fact that America was not living up to what she considered its exceptional potential, engaging instead internally in racial segregation and externally in pronounced racial prejudice,

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not only but especially towards the Chinese and other Asian peoples. Untiringly, she castigated such shortcomings of the American nation; but underneath all her often courageous—and decidedly cosmopolitan—criticism, there remained the dream of the city upon a hill. The U.S., it becomes fairly clear in much of Buck’s writings of the time, was still supposed to be the ‘chosen’ nation that John Winthrop determined it must be in his 1630 “A Modell of Christian Charity.” And by the 1940s, Buck had come to consider herself an integral part of that nation.

Given the fact of her Third Culture Kid history, this seems somewhat remarkable. After all, only a few years earlier, she had claimed that she did not know the U.S. or its culture very well, because she had grown up, and indeed was, Chinese. How could Buck have changed her mind this much? There are two interrelated answers to this question, I believe. The first has, in fact, to do with Buck’s very TCK upbringing, and is thus linked to the experience of unchosen transculturation. For the second answer, it is helpful to remember that all of the cosmopolitan American authors discussed here retained relatively strong emotional attachments to the idea of America, despite their developing cosmopolitanisms and their often extremely critical stances toward their “home” country. This commonality seems to suggest that there might be something about the idea of America that is particularly attractive to cosmopolitans, especially if they have formed their identities in a cultural context that is fully or partly American. In the final section of this chapter, I will therefore examine some of Buck’s political writings of the 1940s for both their committed cosmopolitanism and their pronounced American patriotism. In so doing, I will relate them to both Buck’s TCK
background and the theories of a cosmopolitan America that were highly popular at the time—and that remain popular (albeit in modified form) today.

**Searching for a Home: Pearl S. Buck and the Cosmopolitan American Dream**

If the 1930s were the decade during which Buck turned her back on life as a missionary wife in China and built her reputation as a China expert in the U.S., the 1940s were the period during which she consciously established and cemented her Americanness. Not only did she write several novels that were set in the U.S. under the male pseudonym John Sedges—writing deliberately but anonymously outside of her famous persona as China-specialist—she also published countless articles and several non-fiction books on purely U.S. American topics, be they domestic ones like racial segregation and women’s rights, or international ones like the United States’ conduct abroad. “Although I have lived [for] forty years in China,” she reminds her reader in *American Argument* (1949), “I was born here in America. It is my business to understand my country, perhaps also my duty. Certainly it is my pleasure” (1). Emphasizing thus her patriotic privileges and duties as an American, Buck sets the tone for this passionate critique of American racism and segregation—co-authored with African American activist Eslanda Robeson—by foregrounding her identity as an insider.\(^{55}\) Her criticism of American society, she makes clear in a move more familiar

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\(^{55}\) *American Argument* is one of Buck’s so-called ‘talk books,’ each of which she wrote in conversation with a second author, that author being often a woman and often of another race or nationality, thus offering a different perspective on a particular political and/or social issue. Apart from *American Argument*, with Eslanda Robeson, Buck published four more talk books. *Talk about Russia* (1945) featured Russian-born Masha Scott, who discussed the improvements for citizens after the Russian revolution. *How It Happens* (1947) was a book on Germany, co-written with German socialist Erna von Pustau, who had escaped from Nazism. *Friend to Friend* (1958), on the political situation of the
today in the liberal American slogan “Peace is Patriotic,” is not counter to but rather a result of her patriotism. It is an expression of both her duties as American citizen and her deep emotional attachment to her native country. Using the first person plural when speaking about Americans and repeatedly referring to the U.S. as “my country,” she declares that she “loves” America “as much as” Robeson does—by whatever measure she might quantify that—and that, despite all racial, social, and gender inequality, “America has been good to us” (2). We find this affirmative, even possessive tone with regards to the American in many of Buck’s texts of the 1940s and 50s. Over and over again, she asserts her American-ness and her deep trust in the American people, which is a “good” if “young” people (especially when compared with such ancient civilizations as the Chinese). And while such affirmation is nearly always combined with pointed criticism, this criticism is in itself defined as her patriotic duty as an American. What, then, had happened to the hybrid Third Culture Kid, the renowned China expert, advocate of cosmopolitan equality, and author of *The Good Earth*?

This “other” persona of Buck had not disappeared, but she had certainly put it—so to speak—on the back burner. In his essay “Pearl S. Buck in Search of America” (1992), David Buck confirms that while American-Asian relations were still part

Philippines, she wrote together with Carlos P. Romulo. These books are another expression of Buck’s belief in the value of good-willed conversations with an ‘Other.’ In *American Argument*, for example, in which Buck and Robeson mostly agree on the question of racial discrimination in the U.S., but disagree on the questions of communism and the Soviet Union—Buck was a fervent anti-communist, while Robeson had communist leanings and had spent significant time in Russia—Buck, who published the book, not only gave Robeson room to air her opinions, but also repeatedly mentions that she herself changed her mind. Look, for example, at the following passage: “I am not inclined to be as critical of our country and our people as Eslanda is. [Still,] I have to agree with her criticisms because in the main they are true, and she has more right to make them than I have. But I keep remembering the goodness I have found here in individuals, the ready response of persons upon whom I have called for help when something right needed to be done and I could not do it alone” (116). This is a fairly typical example of how Buck firstly takes up an Other’s opinion, and, secondly, combines her own criticism with an appraisal of the inherent ‘goodness’ of the U.S.
of Buck’s concern during those years, they were “only one element, in a larger cause that dominated both her public life and her literary work.” Her primary effort during those years, according to David Buck, “became to proselytize Americans about her own liberal, democratic, and Protestant Christian principles” (29). This new focus in both her fictional and non-fictional work marks a significant shift in Pearl Buck’s identity. As she writes in the preface of *The Townsman* (1945), one of her John Sedges novels, she was now writing out of and for her “new American me” (vi). David Buck understands Pearl Buck’s deliberate, even demonstrative self-identification as an American during the 1940s as a delayed reaction to her mother’s regret at not having become a missionary in reverse—one who would have lectured Americans about their own heritage, potential and patriotic duties. The grown-up Pearl Buck, he argues, “devoted herself to her mother’s cause” (30).

While I agree that her mother’s unbridled enthusiasm for American ideals certainly *did* play a significant role in Buck’s later turn to a pronounced American-ness, I believe that we also have to take into consideration—in exactly this context—her TCK history and cosmopolitan outlook. After all, as mentioned earlier, it is not at all atypical for Third Culture Kids to seek refuge from their root- and restlessness in the deliberate embrace of *one* given place or culture. Tired of moving as well as of the constant feeling of outsiderness, they at some point, as Pollock and Van Reken put it, “swear they will find a place to call their own, put up the white picket fence, and never, ever, move again” (127). For the Pearl Buck of the 1940s, the place and culture where she decided to put down her white picket fence seems to have been her passport
country (where she bought an old farmhouse—Green Hills Farm—in Pennsylvania),
and her eager embrace of nation and the identity that came with it was not with-
out severe consequences for her cosmopolitanism in process.

Growing up in China, Buck’s mother Caroline (called Carie) had been her
number one source of information about the United States. When she was little, Buck
tells us in *My Several Worlds*, her mother would ‘regale’ her

with memories of quiet village streets, large houses set far back in trees
and lawns, decent folk walking to church on Sundays to worship God
in beautiful old churches, law-abiding men and women, children who
obeyed their parents and learned their lessons in school. Doctors cured
the few sick folk, or sent them to wonderfully clean hospitals, and cer-
tainly no one had cholera or dysentery or typhus. . . . I am not to be
blamed therefore for having grown up with illusions about my own
country. (5)

Such idealizing of the far-away home country is not at all, as we learn from Pollock
and Van Reken, unusual for expatriates. The at least temporarily ‘lost’ home seems so
much more pleasant and ideal when one is far away and forced to deal with the every-
day nuisances of the host culture. In Salman Rushdie’s terms, as I noted in my chapter
on William Gardner Smith, this is the “fantasy of home,” the “dream of roots, the
yearning for an idealized lost home,” and it by definition does not do justice to the
home country’s actually existing *real*. Buck’s first impressions of the United States
were thus not much more than an idealized fantasy, which is why she correctly speaks

56 Rushdie in an interview for *Princeton Report on Knowledge*. “I am not very interested in respect.” in
accessed on January 15, 2008

57 I am using the idea of the Lacanian ‘real’ here as Slavoj Žižek develops it in “Love Thy Neighbor?
No, Thanks!” I have considered the relations between Rushdie’s understanding of the fantasies of home
and away and Žižek’s concept of the ‘ugly real’ in chapter 3 on William Gardner Smith. The real,
according to Žižek, is always ugly, and its forceful intrusion into what we fantasize as our reality, our
symbolic universe, is always traumatic.
of a ‘dream world’ when mentioning her childhood relationship to the U.S. This is all the more true as, from her earliest moments, the “lost” home of Buck’s childhood was first phantasmatic and only second material. That is, having come with her parents to China at the age of three, Buck learned the idea of America long before acquiring any actual experience of the place for herself.

The last sentence in the above quote, however, written down by Buck in 1954, is particularly interesting. Her emphasizing of the fact that she cannot be “blamed” for having grown up with illusions about the U.S. not only shows her adult awareness of the discrepancies between her childhood dream-image and the real of American society, but also entails some sort of self-defense against accusations regarding her initial naiveté and idealism about social conditions in the U.S. This defensiveness might be psychologically telling, because, while Buck’s childhood naiveté very quickly gave way to a sharp and outspoken criticality, the idealism that her mother had planted in her never quite lost its force. As Peter Conn puts it, Buck’s “politics had been permanently affected by the thirty years she spent breathing the air of her mother’s homesick patriotism. For the rest of her life, she was not only disappointed, she was continually surprised and embarrassed whenever American behavior fell short of the unsophisticated idealism she had carried in her immigrant’s baggage” (263). While Buck thus—after having been confronted with American realities—rationally understood that the ideological construct of America that her mother had presented to her was incorrect, and thus changed her understanding and went on to become a courageous and relent-
less critic of American domestic and foreign affairs,\textsuperscript{58} she never truly got over her deep \textit{emotional} attachment to the ‘idea’ of America that her mother had painted for her. From the dozens of relevant texts that Buck produced in the 40s, I will pick out a few selections that highlight not only the dynamics of her cosmopolitan and patriotic attachments, but also help explain why the \textit{idea} of American exceptionalism held such a strong spell over her.

If we look for written expressions of Buck’s cosmopolitan vision, we find ample material among her texts of the early 1940s, when the catastrophe of WWII seemed to urge her to explain to her fellow citizens that this global war could not be won if current social and economic inequalities remained. Racial equality, Buck emphasized in a speech in front of African American graduates at Howard University in 1942 (later published in \textit{The Journal of Negro Education}),\textsuperscript{59} had at this point become “more than a dream—it has now become a necessity if we are to win the war and to achieve the peace. . . . We will not win this war unless we win it as a nation where human beings are equal and human rights are respected” (447-48). Emphasizing that she is “not a pacifist,” Buck similarly declares, in an article entitled “At Home in the World” (1942) and published in \textit{Marriage and Family Living} that she believes war to be “inevitable so long as we do nothing to stop the conditions which over and over again produce [it]” (4).\textsuperscript{60} Addressing herself to American women, Buck insists that they should not close their homes to the realities of the world, and that they must edu-

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\textsuperscript{58} Buck herself describes this process of increasing awareness and the development of her critical consciousness in detail in the last chapter of \textit{What America Means to Me} (1942), pp. 196 ff.


\textsuperscript{60} Pearl S. Buck “At Home in the World.”
\end{flushright}
cate their children in a way that encourages them grow up to take on responsibility for both their country and the world. Neither American isolationism nor personal political disinterest, she explains, will do any longer in the mid-20th century, because “the confines of a community are no longer a single town, or even a single nation. The community has suddenly become the whole world, and world problems impinge upon the humblest of us” (4).

In statements such as these, made in different media to different audiences, Buck expresses her (in a way very Kantian) belief that perpetual peace was only possible through a cosmopolitan world order. What becomes also clear, however, is that Buck considered it the task of Americans to create that world order. And, in her eyes, only a united America could win the war and bring peace to the world. As long the U.S. remained caught up in internal contradictions, promising freedom and equality to everyone and denying it at the same time to a significant part of its population, it could not get enough respect from other peoples to be accepted as a moral leader.61 Such respectful acceptance by others was absolutely necessary, in Buck’s eyes, because she despised both imperialism and any other kind of forced leadership. What she hoped for was indeed some version of the ‘city on the hill,’ the shining example that

61 Buck argues along these lines, for example, in Friend to Friend (1958), at the height of the Cold War. There, she declares that “aided and constantly abetted by Communist propaganda, the Asians believe now that American profession does not and perhaps cannot equal American performance. . . . The Voice of America talks loudly of our principles of racial equality but the Asian newspapers copy from our own newspapers the pictures from Little Rock. Asian eyes look upon Americans stoning our own Negro citizens, they see American faces distorted by hatred against dark-skinned people like themselves. . . . How can we blame the Asian if he doubts us? . . . We are asked, and fairly, how we can practice [our ideals] abroad if we cannot practice them here” (85).
everybody else in the world would voluntarily and out of their own insight accept as
good moral leadership and a guiding light.

The American people were exceptional, in Buck’s eyes, for at least three reasons: their deep belief in individual freedom, their unparalleled diversity, and their indestructible idealism. In *Friend to Friend* (1958), Buck quotes “a friend from Brazil” who told her that “our only safety in the world is that you Americans still have these ideals. No other nation has them in like degree and no other people struggle so bravely to achieve them. On the day when you give up your ideals and cease your struggles I shall give up hope for mankind” (88). This was exactly what Buck herself feared and believed. It was upon the Americans to save the world, and while they indeed had the potential to do so, they were losing the trust of the world’s people due to their inability to let go of race and gender discrimination. “What is the matter with this American?” Buck asks, outraged, in *American Unity and Asia* (1942), “He suffers from what is called in psychology a split personality. He is two distinct Americans. One of him is a benevolent, liberty-loving, just man. The other one of him is a creature who may or may not be benevolent but who is certainly undemocratic . . . and who . . . throws justice and equality to the winds as completely as any Fascist” (31). This, in her eyes, needed to change, and to change quickly, for the sake of the world. Americans needed to go back to their own Constitution, read what was written there, get over their fears and stupidities and make use of the exceptional potential of their society. Otherwise, “if the United States is to include subject and ruler peoples,” she adds provocatively in the same text,
then let us be honest about it and change the Constitution and make it plain that Negroes cannot share the privileges of the white people. True, we would then be totalitarian rather than democratic; but if that is what we want, let us say so and let us tell the Negro so. Then the white Americans will be relieved of the necessity of hypocrisy, and the colored people will know where they are. (American Unity and Asia 15)

Buck, as we see from this and countless other passages, believed deeply in what we would understand as cosmopolitan values—domestic racial and gender equality; equality among nations and peoples; intercultural understanding and respect—and she saw all of these values as embodied in American ideals. Everything that need be said about a utopian cosmopolitan world had already been said, namely in the American Constitution, in the idea of America. Now, it was all a question of execution. This is why Buck made it her number one priority to proselytize Americans about their founding ideals and their poor execution of them. Given her intercultural upbringing and her hybrid identity formation, it is perhaps remarkable that the fact that these founding ideals had deeply Eurocentric and Protestant roots, and that their projection out in the world was therefore an act of universalization, did not seem to bother her at all.

While it is possible, as both Karen Leong and David Buck argue, that Buck retained this attachment to American exceptionalism from her missionary childhood, where it certainly had infused the religious zeal of her parents, a univariate explanation is unlikely here. After all, Buck is not alone in her emotional attachment to the idea of a cosmopolitan and exemplary America. Kay Boyle had a very similar relation

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62 “The only person having full right in the United States,” Buck writes in American Argument “is a white, gentle, Protestant, adult male—and we have to except even the poor white male in the poll-tax South” (139).
to American ideals, and even the existentialist-communist atheist Richard Wright, we should remember, retained certain emotional attachments to the idea of America after more than a decade of expatriation. Also, we should not forget that Buck by no means took on the missionary Orientalism of her father, which said that Westerners (and white-skinned people) in general were superior to the ‘colored’ races. On the contrary, she believed that—while all races of the world had pretty much the same potential naturally—most ‘colored’ people had a better and stronger character than white people. Addressing her black audience during the commencement at Howard University, she explained that this

is not a racial distinction, for I do not believe that character has much to do with race. I do believe, however, that it has a great deal to do with circumstance of life. People who have suffered, people who have had to live with inescapable trouble . . . develop either a corroding bitterness, or a deep wide philosophical outlook on life. . . . I say with complete truth that I find more maturity of spirit among the colored people in this country than among any others. (450-51)

It is the insider-outsider perspective, and the painful suffering related to discrimination, that she is praising here for its character-building qualities. African Americans, she insists in another piece, “are no longer a minority group in one nation. You have become the touchstone of democracy in our own country and in our world.” Elsewhere, she describes the minority populations of the U.S. as an “asset” in a globalizing world: “We Americans are singularly fortunate, if we only knew it, in having ten per-

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63 As I have shown in chapter 3, almost every single one of Wright’s answers to the question “Am I an American?” reveals his deep attachment to the idea of America as a cosmopolitan society and a potential promise for the rest of world.
64 Pearl S. Buck, “Breaking the Barriers of Race Prejudice,” 449.
cent of our people colored. It gives Americans a chance to get ready for the future." Like Wright and DuBois, Buck understood the members of racial and ethnic minorities, because of their insider-outsider perspectives, to be in a privileged position to take on the task of making both the U.S. and the world more cosmopolitan. That she would often address her black audience on such occasions in the first person plural shows that she understood herself, because of her transcultural upbringing and her insider-outsider status as TCK, as a member of this advantaged group, regardless of her skin color.

In certain ways, then, Buck had indeed gone very far from her missionary parents’ attitudes, not only as far as gender relations go, but also as far as race relations were concerned. When it comes to the question of race, her cosmopolitanism was anything but Kantian or Orientalist. And although she kept coming back to the American Constitution and to the founding principles of the United States of America in her texts, it was really a related but different tradition that she built her own cosmopolitan vision upon. This is the tradition that goes back to the French intellectual Alexis de Tocqueville, and which was continued within the U.S. by John Dewey, Horace Kallen, and, most prominently, Randolph Bourne. American society, in this tradition, is understood as inherently transnational and transcultural, and, as a result, is in a particularly privileged position for becoming cosmopolitan.

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66 In *American Argument* she even went so far to say—somewhat crudely—that she “might enjoy life more as a Negro, but one is born with one’s skin fixed. I try to forget it as much as I can. Elsewhere I can forget it entirely but here in my won country, by means of segregation and discrimination, they keep rubbing it in that I am a white” (116).
As I have explained in chapter 1, Randolph Bourne saw huge potential in the cultural diversity of American immigrants. In “Trans-national America” (1916), he insisted that the U.S. was “already the world-federation in miniature, the continent where for the first time in history has been achieved that miracle of hope, the peaceful living side by side, with character substantially preserved, of the most heterogeneous peoples under the sun.”

The United States was, for Bourne, a sort of microcosm of the world, and its social development a testing ground for global cosmopolitan cohabitation and solidarity. “It is for the American of the younger generation to accept this cosmopolitanism,” Bourne declared, “of a United States that is not a nationality but a transnationality, a weaving back and forth, with the other lands, of many threads of all sizes and colors. . . . Already we are living this cosmopolitan America.”

The fact of the microcosm, Bourne argues here, is already a given. It is the responsibility of Americans to accept it, forget about outdated ideas of nativism, and about the Anglo-Saxon Protestantism of the first settlers, and shape instead American society in a truthfully cosmopolitan way, making the best use of its many diverse elements.

Bourne’s vision of a transnational and cosmopolitan America was highly influential during the first half of the 20th century. In “Ethnic Diversity, Cosmopolitanism and the Emergence of the American Liberal Intelligentsia” (1975), historian David Hollinger argues that during the 1940s, 50s, and 60s “a national, secular, ethni-
ally-diverse, left-of-center intelligentsia” developed out of the Bournean tradition; and he gives several reasons for this development (174). For one, the presence of European refugees during the 1930s and 40s changed the self-image of the country. The fact that the U.S. was able to give shelter and security to a diverse group of intellectuals and artists who were persecuted elsewhere, and that consequently “values once associated with Europe, especially Paris” were now suddenly to be found on American soil, made the U.S. seem a lot less “outrageously provincial” (147). Furthermore, its emerging super-power position and “the greater freedom and diversity that seemed to characterize American society” when compared to a Stalinist Soviet Union were taken as additional indicators for American cosmopolitan potential. As a result, the American intelligentsia of the 1940s and 50s came to believe, “with varying degrees of certainty and enthusiasm . . . that the United States had become a viable, if imperfect, embodiment of the cosmopolitan ideal” (147).

This was the intellectual atmosphere in which Pearl Buck wrote her simultaneously cosmopolitan and patriotic texts, participating thus in the overall sentiment of the leftist intelligentsia that, as Hollinger puts it, “patriotism . . . [could] be made compatible with the cosmopolitan ideal” (148). As we know from Anthony Appiah's insistence on cosmopolitan patriotism and Michael McConnell’s belief in patriotism as the necessary prerequisite for cosmopolitanism, this sentiment is far from extinct today. Furthermore, as Karen Leong maintains, Buck’s “enthusiasm for Bourne’s cosmopolitan ideal” was informed by her own “geographic displacement and subse-

69 Well-known members of this group were, for example, Lionel Trilling, Dwight McDonald, David Riesman, Daniel Bell, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Sidney Hook.
70 I have discussed this issue in detail in my theory chapter.
quent transnational identity” (35). If Hollinger emphasizes that many intellectuals of
time felt like they lived in a cosmopolitan America because they were exiles and/or
friends of (other) exiles, Buck, as a transnational subject, must have experienced
things quite similarly. In “On Discovering America” (1937), she describes how, when
returning to America in 1934, she was “a sort of immigrant among immigrants, except
that I came to my native land,” and how she—coming from a relatively homogenous
China—was at first looking for “the” American, finding instead only an incredible
diversity of people.⁷¹ At the same time, she lets her reader know, she found herself
very much distressed by “that amazing hatred among all these Americans for each
other.”⁷² Almost echoing William Gardner Smith, she writes that “a sensitive mind at
first cannot but be frightened and oppressed by the fearful prejudices of race and creed
which possess the feelings of the average American.”⁷³ However, over time, Buck
writes, she came to understand that American immigrants, being by definition the
“restless” people from all countries in the world, “do not enter only as restless indi-
viduals. We come as races, as nations, as transmitters of the past to a country without a
history.”⁷⁴ As a result, “the prejudices of all peoples on earth are now American preju-
dices.”⁷⁵ In her eyes, this was one of the fundamental problems of American society,
and it was imperative that the country come to terms with it.

⁷² Ibid.
⁷³ Ibid.
⁷⁴ Ibid. Buck’s apparently completely uncritical contention that, before European and other
immigration, the U.S. was “a country without a history” seems quite remarkable in the context of
cosmopolitan thinking and a belief in the equality of people and peoples.
⁷⁵ Ibid. Buck’s use of the term ‘prejudice’ here corresponds of course to the colloquial, and not to
Gadamer’s definition. In Gadamer’s view, Americans as described by Buck are ‘stuck’ with their many
But despite these severe problems, Buck insisted that the potential of the United States was, for exactly the reasons that Bourne described, exceptional. In a country that is build on individualism, immigrants such as herself “remain what we are, and to America's endless variety we add our own bit, and so we become American.” And this is exactly, in her eyes, what makes the U.S. unique. “I believe,” she writes at the end of her article, “in exactly the sort of America we have now, except I wish we could see that what we have is good and inevitable, and so cease to hate each other.

Our country is based upon diversity of race and upon freedom of belief, and this is our chief claim to being unique and great.” Buck’s strong belief in American exceptionalism, as it is expressed here, emerges as not so simply founded in a Protestant faith in God’s ‘chosen’ city on the hill. Rather, it is some version of the American Constitution plus the insights of Tocqueville and Bourne that are at the foundation of her conviction. She agrees with Bourne that, because of its unique history, the U.S. is a cosmopolitan microcosm that attracts “the best from all over the world” and has thus the potential to be the embodiment of a truly cosmopolitan society that leads the way for the world into a global, cosmopolitan, peaceful future. This is why she insists that “the future of America depends on immigration. . . . Her strength is drawn from all peoples and her future depends on us all.” This is also why she, as a transnational subject,

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76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
was able to feel at home in the United States—more so, perhaps, than because of her citizenship. She did not necessarily feel at home in the actually existing country, that is, but rather in the idea of America. And it was because she, as a Third Culture Kid, had already decided to make her home in this particular idea of America that she was so outraged about American discrimination and imperialism. It was discouraging for her to see how again and again, America fell short of its potential.

Why, then, Buck never lost her belief in the dream of a cosmopolitan America can, in my view, be explained best in terms of psychologies of outsiderness and of hope. In the end, she seems to have needed the idea of a cosmopolitan America too badly to ever let go of her faith in it. This may well have been partly the case because she, as a homeless Third Culture Kid, had decided to make her home in this idea. But surely, too, the idea in itself was too attractive in terms of the hope for global solidarity to be surrendered. Her belief in the cosmopolitan potential of American society, however—misguided or not—never stopped Buck from being a fierce critic of U.S. domestic and foreign policy, or of aspects of American ideology she thought to be detrimental. This particular tension between Buck’s transcultural identity, her residual Americanness, and her passionate concern for the rest of the world (as well as for minority groups within the U.S.) makes her and her oeuvre an all the more fascinating choice for scholars and students interested in transnational experiences and variations of American cosmopolitanism.
AFTERWORD

To write a dissertation on cosmopolitanism and to then concentrate on four authors who all belong—legally—to the same nation-state and write in the same language, might seem a peculiar choice. After all, it is the crossing and transcending of boundaries like those of states and languages that lies at the heart of the cosmopolitan endeavor. In the beginning, it was thus with hesitation that I made my decision to focus on American authors only, and it was a decision prompted at least partly by necessities of time, scope and field of specialization. What reconciled me with the exigency to focus on writers from one literary tradition, however, was that this focus seems well supported by the insistence of some ‘new cosmopolitans,’ like Bruce Robbins and Pheng Cheah, that cosmopolitanism is necessarily understood differently in specific historical and geographical spaces. If this is the case, and I believe it is, one can indeed justifiably pick out one location and examine the kind of cosmopolitanism that emerges from it as something that is specific and contingent. Timothy Brennan even goes so far to assert that cosmopolitanism “makes sense only in the context of a specific national-cultural mood” (2002, 660-61, my emphasis).

Understanding this statement through a Gadamerian lens—that is, understanding Brennan to speak about a certain kind of historical situatedness—I agree with him, but not so much because, as he continues, “cosmopolitanism is the [economically adjuvant] way in which a kind of American patriotism is today being expressed” (681). American patriotism is not what is at stake in cosmopolitanism generally.
Rather, the historical situation that is the U.S. (though hardly only the U.S.) has involved interpellation as a national subject that results, at best, in a later attachment of cosmopolitan tags to some of the best and brightest of what are learned first as national ideals. As long as nation-states are around and actively seeking to secure support and a sense of belonging from their citizenries, we must assume that national ideologies will continue to play their roles in identity. As a result, cosmopolitanism(s) cannot help but be at least informed (and to a certain degree even produced) by certain (national) socio-historical conditions. Seen in this light, writing a dissertation about an American brand of cosmopolitanism in the early to mid-20th century actually makes quite a bit of sense. That does not change the fact, of course, that a world citizen’s focus will be on the transcendence of national and other limits, and that her projects ultimately will work toward a loosening of boundaries, be they national, psychological or disciplinary.

The four American authors discussed in this dissertation all very much contest the standard meaning of ‘national literature.’ While all four indeed held (for most of the time) American passports, and while their world views were informed by American ideologies, only a transnational perspective can do them and their work justice. Living beyond the boundaries of the American nation, Kay Boyle, Richard Wright, William Gardner Smith, and Pearl S. Buck all underwent a continuous struggle to reconcile their emerging cosmopolitanisms with a residual national consciousness. This residual national consciousness, as we have seen, had in all four cases much to do with an idea of America, loosely connected to that written down in the Declaration of
Independence in 1776: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” The national idea implied in this declaration holds a promise for those who will be subjected to the laws and social conditions of the nation-state it begins to instantiate. It is the promise that the ultimate units of concern in this community are individual human beings, regardless of their race, religion, nationality or other distinguishing features, and that each human being has some fundamental rights which can never be taken away from him or her. As such, it is a promise that reads like the definition of a cosmopolitan ethics, except that it is framed by a specific nation-state. And though—with slavery, patriarchy, colonial exploitation and a deep-rooted structural focus on the maintenance of property-based inequality—this promise has been compromised and neglected from the very first, it has continued and still continues to cast its spell.

It is because of this ideological promise, combined with the fact of continued American immigration, that people like Tocqueville and Bourne believed in America's potential to become the pioneering cosmopolitan society of the future. And it is for the very same reasons, I believe, that the four cosmopolitan Americans in this dissertation never managed to completely leave behind their attachments to the United States. No matter how great their disappointment and alienation, they were never quite able to forget what they considered the great, even unique American potential for a demo-
ocratic, multi-racial and multi-ethnic civic community. This ideal of a cosmopolitan society in the U.S., however, as David Hollinger reminds us, “is, indeed, just that, an ideal, embodying the hope that the United States can be more than a site for a variety of diasporas and of projects in colonization and conquest” (336). So far, this hope has not been fulfilled. All of the writers discussed here were aware of this failure to an unusually high degree. Nevertheless, none of them could ever give up completely their hope for a cosmopolitan American future. This is what makes their brand of cosmopolitanism an American one, emerging from and remaining inflected by the American ideological context. And while this seems to support Timothy Brennan’s statement that cosmopolitanism(s) emerge always from “a specific cultural-national mood,” we should not lose sight of the fact that if such cosmopolitanism(s) are critical and in process—as was the case with the authors under consideration here—they nevertheless work towards a transcendence of the nation, in physical as well as ideological and emotional terms.

If we are interested in helping American students to become less ethnocentrically oriented and more worldly, the teaching of such American cosmopolitan texts might thus be an effective choice, exactly because they open up to the world while still actively wrestling with their own residual Americanness. Not only do such texts encourage the kind of imaginative engagement with world history and politics for which Stanton and Nussbaum call, but they also promote critical discussion of American dreams and realities. Of course, the four authors I have here considered constitute only

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1 Whether this potential is uniquely U.S. American, of course—or is even a realistic potential of the United States—is certainly worthy of more than a little question; the important thing psychologically, however, is that it is believed to be uniquely American.
a very small selection of literature that might be interesting for such a project. Texts of other worldly-minded American writers come to mind (Paul Bowles, for example, as well as James Baldwin, Gary Snyder, Martha Gellhorn, and Paul Theroux), as do the literatures of border-crossing immigrants into the United States and of ethnic minority groups within the nation. These texts, I believe, are just as important for a ‘cosmopolitan’ education in the field of literature as are texts of other languages and cultures (as Stanton has suggested). They invite meditation on and discussion of the inherent and inevitable interdependency of the U.S. with the rest of the world, something that still seems to be underappreciated by a good number of American students.

If we want to take seriously Stanton’s and Nussbaum’s urging for a more cosmopolitan education at American (or non-American) universities, then, it becomes clear at this point, we must (re)engage with the ongoing discussion on the pros and cons of disciplinarity. In what has become “my field”—American Literature—a good number of influential scholars are already suggesting a reconceptualization of American literature as a transnational entity, among them Paula Moya, Ramón Saldívar, John Carlos Rowe, Amy Kaplan, Shelley Streeby, Wai Chee Dimock, and Brent Edwards. The work of these transnational critics points in the right direction, and, as I mentioned in the introduction, I see my own work as part of the movement their efforts represent.

In “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism,” the essay that helped spark the recent re-engagement with cosmopolitanism, Martha Nussbaum offered a rather compelling reason for why not only American students but we all should care about this global
interdependency, why it is important that we learn to be better citizens of the world. Nussbaum’s rationale, as I have explained in chapter 1, is to a large degree ecological, as she argues that “we live in a world in which the destinies of nations are closely intertwined with respect to basic goods and survival itself” (12). It is because air or water pollution do not stop traveling at national boundaries that Nussbaum asserts that “any intelligent deliberation about ecology—as, also, about the food supply and population—requires global planning, global knowledge, and the recognition of a shared future” (12). While I do take (considerable) issue with the nationalist undertone that Nussbaum’s reasoning displays, here and elsewhere, she makes an important point. Recent ecological developments—such as the noticeable shrinkage of resources and the drastic effects of global climate change—have reminded us that capital is not the only transnational force. A renewed interested in world citizenship is not only ethically ‘nice,’ but materially crucial.

This is why, in the end, cosmopolitan education, if we take it seriously, cannot end with the academic study of literary texts of any kind. While I do believe that such imaginative engagement can be an important first or parallel step, an education that truly aims at making people better citizens of the world must necessarily go beyond literary studies or even the humanities. Raising awareness of the interconnectedness of political, social, economic and environmental problems worldwide requires a transcending of traditional disciplinary boundaries. As Gro Harlem Brundtland already insisted in her 1987 introduction to Our Common Future, the official report of the UN World Commission on Environment and Development, “the challenges put before us
cut across the divides of national sovereignty, of limited strategies for economic gain, and of separated disciplines” (x). Twenty years later, this has not changed, only perhaps, that the challenges have become greater and that much more urgent. A truly cosmopolitan education must prepare people to meet these global challenges, and it must thus work towards transcending narrow national imaginations as well as disciplinary boundaries. It will not stop at engendering, as Nussbaum has requested, sympathetic understanding of other cultures, but also advocate, in the spirit of the Brundtland Commission, transnational and transracial solidarity for the sake of all, non-human animals and ecosystems included. Cosmopolitanism can only have meaning if it is ‘in process’ in the fullest sense of those words, if, rather than being simply felt and internal, it is also lived and external. The education of world citizens must therefore, as much as anything else, foster actual action in the world. If this sounds utopian or impractical, I will acknowledge that it is not an easy project. But that does not mean that cosmopolitan education cannot or should not be developed. Understanding American or any kind of literature—and the teaching of it—as a more worldly and globally connected project is one part of this process.


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