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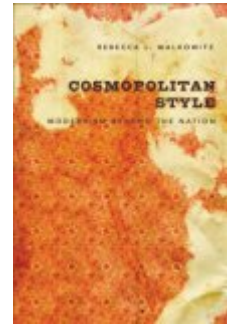
in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Chris Rumsford, ed. *Cosmopolitanism and Europe*. Studies in Social and Political Thought. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007. 272 pp. \$85.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-84631-046-1.

Rebecca L. Walkowitz. *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006. 248 pp. \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-231-13750-8.

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Term Seeks Definition

These two explorations of cosmopolitanism from quite different fields highlight the diverse meanings that this contested term inhabits in scholarship today. The value of considering these two works together is precisely the way in which such comparison brings definitional commonalities to the fore.

Cosmopolitan Style binds concerns of literary modernism with “critical cosmopolitanism.” Seeking to define the latter, Rebecca L. Walkowitz states, “[b]y speaking of *critical* cosmopolitanism, I mean to designate a type of international engagement that can be distinguished from ‘planetary humanism’ [Paul Gilroy] by two principal characteristics, an aversion to heroic tones of appropriation and progress, and a suspicion of epistemological privilege, views from above or from the center that assume a consistent distinction between who is seeing and what is seen” (p. 2). For her, the adjective implies a “double consciousness” in which cosmopolitanism and its critique are simultaneously present. Her approach seems to move beyond the critical theory of Max Horkheimer as well as to embrace Theodor W. Adorno’s suspicion of instrumental reason and Stuart Hall’s emphasis on differentiation. Walkowitz seeks what she calls a “critique of critique” among certain writers, an approach that for her calls into question normative categories of analysis such as “rationality, purpose, coherence, [and] detachment” (p. 3).

Walkowitz links literary modernism with this critical cosmopolitanism through the study of particular literary techniques employed by several modernist writers (Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce) and several contemporary writers generally considered postmodern and/or postcolonial and whom she sees as rooted in modernism (Salman Rushdie, Kazuo Ishiguro, and W. G. Sebald). Through attention to one or a few of the works of each of these authors, she demonstrates how each narrative strategy functions as a “critique of critique.” These techniques and the critically cosmopolitan stances that they suggest are not political in an internationalist, activist, or standpoint sense. Rather, Walkowitz argues that their political effects are to be found in the ways in which they destabilize categories, enable new ways of seeing, and offer their readers new modes of consciousness or understanding.

Each author engages with nation. Consider the three modernist texts. Walkowitz argues that in *The Secret Agent* (1907), Joseph Conrad employs a socially shaped “naturalness” to interrogate “nature,” especially as an essential category of national identification. As Conrad himself struggled with his status as a Pole living in Britain and writing in English, his characters *pass* with effort; for instance, by taking on certain patterns of enunciation and comportment. Tales such as *The Secret Agent* highlight the ill fit of societal categories. Conrad

demonstrates both in his life as a writer and in his texts that Englishness is heterogeneous, shifting, and constituted from beyond as well as from within national borders. For Walkowitz, James Joyce calls the homogeneity of nation into question through recourse to “triviality.” In her reading of the “Cyclops” episode of *Ulysses* (1922), for instance, she emphasizes how Joyce on one hand presents an ideal of community solidarity across national borders in the character of Leopold Bloom. Yet, for her, Joyce immediately undercuts these values by casting them as elitist, using the responses of Bloom’s interlocutors. Not presented as authentic either, the commentaries of these working-class Dubliners reveal attachment to traditional norms of Irishness that are shaped by their far less privileged situations and their concomitant sense of the fragility of their place among ideals of cosmopolitan citizenship. In the example of Virginia Woolf, notably *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), Walkowitz argues that the “evasion” of the topic of war, coupled with the foregrounding of quotidian and domestic life, resists heroic narrations of patriotism and masculinity: “By cultivating moments of diversion and by rejecting wartime priorities of attention, Woolf makes her readers more aware of social networks and helps them to distinguish between specific perspectives and universal ones” (p. 153).

Walkowitz finds similar cosmopolitan perspectives among a group of three contemporary writers whose biographies as “English writers” are also non-traditional. She considers several of their texts from the 1980s and 1990s, in each case highlighting the literary technique that drives their stances. Walkowitz demonstrates that Ishiguro’s novels call for “treason” relative to national identification. His use of unreliable narrators furthers the message that, far from pledging unyielding allegiance, citizens must constantly reassess loyalties in modes of self-reflexivity and skepticism. In *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), moreover, Ishiguro suggests that art should further such attitudes among individuals, rather than shoring up communitarian projects, especially those underwritten by governments. Walkowitz argues that Rushdie employs a strategy of “mix-ups” to express his critical cosmopolitanism. These “ordinary social and semantic mistakes ... can create opportunities for effective, if sometimes impermanent agency” (p. 131). In this case, she points out both that Rushdie is aware that not all types of mix-ups, of new connections, are emancipatory and that mix-ups themselves can function as devices of global capitalism. In my view, these positions on the part of Rushdie push Walkowitz’s own notion of critical cosmopolitanism a step further by recognizing the potential

impossibility of moving outside of the culture industry through aesthetic or other means.

Walkowitz’s readings suggest to me that the cosmopolitanism of these modernist or late modernist writers is not fully “critical” on her terms of “a suspicion of epistemological privilege,” because the critique of the center that each of these writers seems to undertake in the works remains focused on that center and in this way risks being unable to dislodge this privilege. My reaction here is, of course, one that haunts fields such as masculinity and critical white studies. And, indeed, in her analysis of Sebald, Walkowitz mentions this potential limitation. Overall, her project seems aimed towards linking literary modernism with the rather trendy notion of cosmopolitanism and even, occasionally, with the term “transnational.” Hers would certainly not be the first scholarly *tour de force* to choose this route in the tight world of academic publishing.

Within the field of literary modernism, this text seeks to bridge a commonly made distinction between the internationalist politics of 1899-1940, which are sometimes connected to modernism, and modernist aesthetics, which are often seen as divorced from politics. For Walkowitz, these tropes of aesthetic modernism engender political change. The articulation of this argument and the argument itself bear further consideration for two reasons. The first is the way in which Walkowitz’s text rewrites the individualism that these authors themselves seemingly champion by focusing on their biographies and their intentionality as evidenced in their writings. Her text seems to be following in the footsteps of these early-twentieth-century intellectuals who understood “individualism as a social and political cause” (p. 11). Their literary strategies become the equivalent of a personal that is always already political and that yet that risks obscuring institutional politics. My concerns here are as a scholar convinced that authorial intentionality is only vaguely discernable in literary texts and one who is attuned to the critical scholarship on individualism.

This latter concern loops back to the exuberance of Walkowitz’s insistence on political efficacy by means of non-normative literary tropes. What is the status of this resistance? In my opinion, hopes pinned to “play” are passing, maybe due to our own passing from the myth of the “end of history” into post-September 11. My disquiet does not mean that I do not deeply appreciate Walkowitz’s compelling, situated textual analyses that demonstrate her points masterfully. Yet, I hope that the example of Sebald will illustrate the overt politics of such

playful literary devices within specific (in this case national) contexts. Walkowitz focuses on *The Rings of Saturn* (1999). She writes: "Sebald's narrators, who share many of their author's biographical details—sometimes his name—often express a sense of uneasiness, discomfort, and even panic that Sebald calls "vertigo" (p. 158). For Walkowitz, this vertigo motivates thought and new ways of seeing. Sometimes this seeing consists of new juxtapositions—for example, the horrors of the Allied air war on the Germans and of the concentration camps. While Walkowitz sketches the hot debate around this association among scholars who work on things German, it remains an aside, rather than shaping her analysis of the comparison as it appears in *The Rings of Saturn*. She notes that the tales of the horrors are "different points of view, ethically and historically" (p. 165). She is more interested in the point that for her these individual perspectives allow each character to "think globally and locally at the same time" (p. 165). This example, involving a literary text that arguably employs a critically cosmopolitan perspective, illustrates a potential weakness of critical cosmopolitanism—inattentiveness to local privileges through a focus on global similarities.

In his introduction to *Cosmopolitanism and Europe*, an edited volume based on a conference of the Department of Politics and International Relations, University of London, Chris Rumford makes the case for more expansive definitions of cosmopolitanism. For him, it should be defined beyond institutions; for instance, Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida's now well-known essay "Nach dem Krieg: Die Wiedergeburt Europas" (2003) on the European Union is too structurally oriented. At the same time, Rumford cautions about the effects of cultural invocations. Referring again to the Habermas essay, he points out that its normative "core values" argument shored up the divisive "new" versus "old" Europe distinctions made by the Bush administration. Yet, Rumford's notion of cosmopolitanism aims to incorporate culture and identity. Based on recognition of flux and change, it is a critique of the self/other binary in a sociological register.

As do so many of the articles in this volume, Rumford's urges agency and voluntarism on the part of elites who will engage in such renegotiations. His essay underplays the difficulties and necessity of involving the less privileged. Imagining a "cosmopolitan Europe ... with ... a concern to promote peace, democracy and open markets" (p. 8), Rumford risks replacing the global hegemon of the United States with a new colossus. F. Peter Wagner conjures a analogous specter in "Security: Cosmopolitanism and European," when he argues not only

that Europe must risk domestic and international insecurities to avoid a police state and that Europe must sometimes intervene outside its borders, but also that western values are important goals for all and therefore that it is up to western powers to export them. Preempting any parallels readers might make to European colonialism, he notes that that specific history featured major discrepancies between theory and practice.

Wagner's piece is one of four in the last section, entitled "Part 3: Europe, Trans-nationalism and Cosmopolitan Mobilities." In another, "Social Indicators of Cosmopolitanism and Localism in Eastern and Western Europe: An Exploratory Analysis," Victor Roudometof and William Haller use quantitative analysis to test the viability of the cosmopolitan-local distinction. Their results demonstrate, for instance, that a significant number of cosmopolitans identify with specific geographic location and that in this case they tend to be right-leaning. Based on their findings, Roudometof and Haller recommend a European Union formed as a European Free Trade Agreement, or "a cosmopolitan identity embodied in the pluralized cultural models of a societal identity, rather than as a supra-national identity or an official EU identity" (p. 196). The latter seems to mean a cultural identity that will not get in the way of market politics. These recommendations suggest to me the importance of continuing to develop both European institutional structures and grassroots European culture.

In "Figures of the Cosmopolitan," Eleonore Kofman offers a corrective to the vision of cosmopolitanism evidenced in many of these texts and in the literature generally. She writes: "Too much of the celebratory writing on cosmopolitanism is not substantiated by empirical evidence and is more concerned with generating a new orthodoxy of theorizing social life based on the entitled and privileged subject, who enjoys unfettered movement, who effortlessly consumes different cultures and places, and who is free to proclaim multiple identities" (p. 253). The two cases that prove her point come from either end of the spectrum of privilege. On one hand, she shows that frequent travelers seldom make the time to engage with local concerns. If they connect to place, they do so in their home base which, moreover, is stabilized both by differently mobile migrant workers of the service industry and their less mobile families. Kofman's other example is the minority group member who is a "transnational" because of multiple affiliations and/or cross-border movements, but who cannot inhabit the role of cosmopolitan because the chauvinism of dominant groups impedes access to it. Kofman

explores this phenomenon further by historicizing cosmopolitanism, showing how this term often held a negative valence, whether it was applied to heterogeneously populated cities or to Jews, foreigners, or migrants. She argues that this definition is lived in Europe today by non-dominant groups such as Muslims. Thus, some who formally fulfill common definitions of cosmopolitanism must repeatedly prove their European allegiance in order to gain provisional acceptance from a society that otherwise fetes the cosmopolitan citizen. Maria Rovisco makes a related point in “Cosmopolitanism, Collective Belonging and the Borders of the EU.” She shows how the cosmopolitan values of solidarity, peace, and human rights that are understood to underpin European identity are at odds with values of Europe as a space of “peace and security.” She argues that in practice the latter means that groups understood not to hold such values—Muslims, for instance—are excluded from the European project, its cosmopolitan values notwithstanding.

Part 2, entitled “Europe and the Cosmopolitan Public Sphere,” begins with Kate Nash’s piece, “Out of Europe: Human Rights and the Prospects for Cosmopolitan Democracy.” Nash argues that cosmopolitanism democracy must grow within nationalism, as nation-states are the only structures available. Under these circumstances, leaders and scholars must be vigilant of the potential dangers that inhere, both those traditionally associated with nationalist identities and the vicissitudes associated with the popular will. In “The European Information Society: A New Public Sphere?” Barrie Axford and Richard Hugins assess current structures of information exchange and conclude that none are European public spheres in the Habermasian sense. For instance, less than a forum for debate, the European Information Society Project (EISP) offers the possibility of “public talk.” Rather than bemoaning this situation, the authors suggest that we dispense with normative ideas of what constitutes adequate forums for exchange in the new Europe, especially given that the definition of Europe itself is in flux.

In “Cultural Europeanization and the ‘Cosmopolitan Condition’: European Union Regulation and European Sport,” Maurice Roche uses European football as a case study for what he might understand as an alternative public sphere. He argues that soccer evidences the strength of Europeanization from the bottom up. According to Roche, EU policy has become much more “reactive” and “interventionist” since the top-down and largely ineffective Adonnino Report of 1985; nevertheless, scholars should attend more to such on-the-ground, consumer realities of European identification. As a non-sports fan

who appreciated Roche’s argument, I would nevertheless have benefited from a more explicit demonstration of soccer as a bottom-up phenomenon. The most recent World Cup was governmentally and privately organized, and Roche cites the Adonnino Report as proposing EU football and cycling contests to shore up Europeanness. These examples suggest to me a relationship of give-and-take, to say the least.

In “The Language of Democracy: Vernacular or Esperanto? A Comparison of the Multiculturalist and Cosmopolitan Perspectives,” Daniele Archibugi comes to what we may call a cosmopolitan solution to the problem of communication between the many EU member states by suggesting multilingualism based on English and French, which for him are the European *linguas francae* of today. Bilingualism is both possible and beneficial for individuals. Moreover, monolingualism is a mark of privilege; two-thirds of the world’s populace is already bilingual. In making his case, Archibugi elegantly notes as he has elsewhere that making polyglots illiterate is easy, but that social policy should seek the opposite goal—to expand its members polyglot literacy. Nevertheless, by setting up Esperanto as a Newspeak bogeyman à la Aldous Huxley, Archibugi deflects attention from how a French and English vernacular inscribes power. Even his demand that French and English native speakers swap languages in public forums cannot dislodge this concern—although the filling of governance halls with what might then well be the strongest accents of the European Union might have significant entertainment value.

In “Memories of Europe: Cosmopolitanism and Its Others,” Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider use the example of Holocaust memory culture to demonstrate the chauvinism of Europe. The reception debate has turned on particularity vs. universality, which Levy and Sznaider point out is also a contest about the status of victim and perpetrator. Major shifts in Europe grant this old debate new meaning; for instance, many eastern newcomers seek comparisons between Stalinism and the Holocaust. In addition, populations such as Muslim Europeans live daily with rejection of their culture by non-Muslims. For Sznaider and Levy, not accounting for such deep particularities and not recognizing the Eurocentrism at the heart of the “universal” risks the cosmopolitan project.

The essays in part 1, “Cosmopolitan Europe: Theory and Politics,” read somewhat as manifestos for the future of European identity. Vivienne Boon and Gerard Delanty point in “Cosmopolitanism and Europe: Historical Considerations and Contemporary Applications” to a

new cosmopolitan identity that should break boundaries, especially between the self and the foreign. They recommend a Europe that oscillates between local and global in a continual process of self-transformation. In “Reinventing Europe—A Cosmopolitan Vision,” Ulrich Beck argues famously that “[d]iversity is the very source of Europe’s potential creativity. The paradox is that nationalist thinking can be the worst enemy of the nation. The European Union (EU) is better placed to advance national interests than nations could possibly do acting alone” (p. 39). The cosmopolitan Europe that Beck imagines is rooted in heterogeneity and will counter U.S. hegemony through “empire.” This term, pronounced in French—perhaps in homage to Derrida’s *différance*—suggests to Beck “soft” power and a cooperative domestic and international stance. In “Cosmopolitan Europe, Postcolonialism and the Politics of Imperialism,” Nick Stevenson goes further than Beck in suggesting a more open Europe by calling for one that counters both U.S. dominance and neoliberalism: living with global difference and developing new relationships with the global South. While on one hand, Smith’s postcolonial critique calls for “mutual cultural and political projects that aim to construct an alternative politics to neo-liberalism,” he also writes that the solutions will come from the North, as Europeans should “suggest different models of development for the most impoverished societies on the planet” (p. 68). Perhaps I misconstrue Stevenson here; from a postcolonial perspective, in any case, the South must have

more voice at the table in such cooperative projects. Perhaps the contribution of Paul Jones obliquely points the way. In “Cosmopolitanism and Europe: Describing Elites or Challenging Inequalities?” he calls for a cosmopolitanism with more commitment to social justice. Such a model would begin to account for more types of European identities, rather than focusing exclusively on the “elite realities of a highly mobile class of Europeans” (p. 72).

The cosmopolitanism that emerges from these contributions in the fields of literary criticism and political sociology has the following characteristics: consciousnesses and practices that involve movement across borders and boundaries; rethinking of categories, identities, and affiliations; conceptualization of identities and affiliations based beyond the nation-state and in relation to difference; and modes of becoming that are less about roots and more about branching connections. These characteristics are common to many intellectual visions, whether in modern and postmodern theories, or in productive and reproductive practices. The cosmopolitanisms predominately articulated in these texts—with the exceptions noted above—seem to be driven by utopian impulses that would avoid painful confrontation with radical otherness and dolorous separation from familiarity. My exploration of these works brought home to me the importance of recognizing the privilege involved in such expectations and of furthering common access to this privilege.

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