J.M. COETZEE AND THE LIMITS OF COSMOPOLITAN FEELING

by

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Abstract

In this dissertation, I argue that accounts of cosmopolitan literature tend to equate cosmopolitanism with sympathetic feeling. I further contend that sympathy is in fact implicitly central to a wider body of contemporary cosmopolitan theory. I distinguish between two strains of cosmopolitan thought that depend upon two distinct models of feeling: “critical cosmopolitanism,” which depends upon a cognitive-evaluative model of sympathy, and “affective cosmopolitanism,” which depends upon a relational model. Both branches of cosmopolitanism envision sympathy as perfectly human or humane; they gloss over the potential for feeling shame in cosmopolitan encounters. The minority of scholarship that does consider shame in relation to cosmopolitan practice also reifies shame as ideally human or humane. Whether through sympathy or shame, cosmopolitan subjects become cosmopolitan through feeling. I offer readings of J.M. Coetzee’s later fiction in order to critique the idealization of feeling as distinctly cosmopolitan. Coetzee’s work, I conclude, suggests another model for cosmopolitanism, one which foregrounds the limits of feeling for realizing mutuality and equality.
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# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. ii  
Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................. iii  
Chapter 1 Introduction: Cosmopolitanism and Sympathy ......................................................... 1  
Chapter 2 J.M. Coetzee’s *Autre*biography and the Limits of Sympathy in Critical Cosmopolitanism ......................................................................................................................... 37  
Chapter 3 Elizabeth Costello and the Limits of Sympathy in Affective Cosmopolitanism ........ 66  
Chapter 4 Cosmopolitanism and Shame .................................................................................. 98  
Chapter 5 J.M. Coetzee and the Cosmopolitan Visitor ............................................................. 127  
References .............................................................................................................................. 160
Chapter 1 Introduction:

Cosmopolitanism and Sympathy

“Isn’t that what is most important about fiction: that it takes us out of ourselves, into other lives?”

—Elizabeth Costello, 23

Does reading literature enhance the sympathetic imagination? If so, might the study of literature foster a cosmopolitan practice that establishes equitable relations premised on mutual sympathy? These questions may easily be decried as naively and sentimentally utopian. They may be decried as naïve, because they envision diverse readerships that are homogenously affected by a course of literary study. They may be decried as sentimental, because they suggest a correlation between sympathy and equality. Yet, contemporary cosmopolitan thinkers have repeatedly affirmed the potential of reading literature for the development of the sympathetic imagination and the increased capacity to feel for other human beings, howsoever distant and different. Such affirmations foreground both a desire for a universal human sympathy and a faith in the humane effects of sympathy persisting within contemporary cosmopolitan theory, even though contemporary cosmopolitan discourse actively refutes accusations of naïveté and sentimentality. This dissertation endeavours to articulate the ways in which discrete understandings of sympathy come to dictate and reify cosmopolitan practices.

Definitions of “cosmopolitanism” have proliferated in the last two decades.¹ I contend, however, that much contemporary work on cosmopolitanism is consistent insofar as sympathy, as

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¹ Moral philosophers, social scientists, cultural theorists, and literary critics have theorized a plethora of cosmopolitanisms: “inclusionary” and “exclusionary” cosmopolitanism (Anderson); “cosmopolitan internationalism” (Atack); “new cosmopolitanism” (Beck; Malcomson; Fine); “cosmofeminism”
a conscious or unconscious mechanism, is the means by which the individual is represented as becoming a cosmopolitan subject. Similarly, while “sympathy” itself can take on a range of meanings, I argue for the ways in which the term has taken on a particularly cosmopolitan valence. Linking my analysis of cosmopolitanism and sympathy to the fiction of Nobel Laureate J.M. Coetzee, the author of my epigraph, I think through the limits of the cosmopolitan sympathetic imagination and consider how those limits might lead to the re-imagining of cosmopolitan practice, particularly as it might be performed through the reading of literature. Coetzee’s work, as the epigraph to this chapter suggests, engages explicitly with the possibility that fiction brings us “into other lives.” At the same time, it challenges readers to consider that sympathy is highly equivocal. The speaker of the epigraph, John, poses his clichéd question about fiction in the midst of a flirtation on a “foreign continent” that leads him to feel first a “dizzying” “shock” of desire, only to wake “once during the night, overwhelmed with sadness” (23). His account of the sympathetic action of fiction is framed in a fiction that self-reflexively stages a moment of entering “into other lives” that is highly ambivalent. Through reading Coetzee, I develop an understanding of cosmopolitanism that more fully attends to the contingency and fleetingness of sympathetic engagement on a cosmopolitan scale. In arguing that Coetzee’s work suggests how the extension of community experienced through sympathy is both conditioned by, and a condition for, the failure of community experienced as shame, I undertake to describe

(Breckenridge et al.); “hybrid cosmopolitanism” (Cheah, Inhuman); “postmodern cosmopolitanism” (Douzinas); “cultural cosmopolitanism” (Held); “weak” and “strong” cosmopolitanism (Miller); “visceral cosmopolitanism” (Nava); and “actually existing” cosmopolitanism (Robbins, “Introduction”). The list is by no means exhaustive. As Dorothy Driver has noted, Robert J. Holton’s Cosmopolitanisms: New Thinking and New Directions (2009) lists nearly 150 “instances” and “types” of cosmopolitanism. Sociologists, psychologists, literary critics, historians, and cultural theorists demonstrate the many ways sympathy can be conceived: as a “reaching out to others” (Clark); as compassion for suffering (Garber); as “sadomasochistic” (Hinton); as a means of differentiation (Rai); as a sense of wonderment or delusion (Ratcliffe); or as a moral response (Craig Taylor, Sympathy).
cosmopolitanism in terms that explicitly exclude the identification of any perfectly cosmopolitan feeling.

In the first half of this introductory chapter, I delineate the relation between cosmopolitanism and sympathy with reference to two particular strains of cosmopolitan thought. Specifically, I contextualize contemporary cosmopolitan theory within a brief historical genealogy of the connections between sympathy, cosmopolitanism, and the novel in works by Adam Smith and Immanuel Kant. These thinkers are touchstones for contemporary debates that ask if and how sympathetic reading constitutes a sound basis for cosmopolitan practice. I go on to argue that even discussions of cosmopolitanism that do not centre on the literary often invoke sympathy, and its cultivation, as central to cosmopolitan practice.

In the second half of the chapter, I outline the critical work and methodology of my project as a whole. In this chapter I identify specifically cosmopolitan models of sympathy; in subsequent chapters, I think through the limitations inhering in these models by reading the fiction and nonfiction of J.M. Coetzee. By engaging with how Coetzee’s later fiction, especially, represents sympathy as that which is intractably imperfect, and always already a condition for shame, this thesis delineates how cosmopolitan outlooks often fail to negotiate, or even to acknowledge, interruptions of sympathy. It goes on to ask how cosmopolitanism might be envisioned in a world of imperfect sympathy, where encounters with “others” are potentially as shaming as they are enlightening. My final question reworks those with which I begin: how might the study of literature be a means by which to forward a cosmopolitanism that promotes human equity but yet acknowledges imperfect sympathy for distant and different others?
1.i The Novel, Sympathy, and Cosmopolitanism: An Historical Genealogy

Since the novel’s popularization in the eighteenth century, novel reading has been associated with the cultivation of an ethically or politically efficacious sympathy. Theories of the relation between novels and sympathy have not always been amenable, however, to the cultivation of a particularly cosmopolitan perspective. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), Adam Smith articulates an idea of sympathy that is concomitant with a “sense of propriety” that both marks individual virtue and ensures the fulfillment of public duties (137). This idea of sympathy, however, is explicitly pitted against “[t]he stoical apathy” that characterizes classical cosmopolitan thought (Smith 137). In the philosophy of Zeno, the *cosmo-polites*, the “citizen of the world,” is detached from the feelings of the *polis*, while in communion with the wise and virtuous, through divine *logos* (Douzinas 152). The *apatheia* of the Stoic stands in contrast to the *sympatheia* of the united *demos*: “The Greek verb *sympascho* and the noun *sym-patheia* mean to suffer with others, to feel with and for others, to be affected by the same thing and to link emotions in public” (Douzinas 75-76). Smith argues against the Stoics, stating that we must relinquish the idea that “we should view ourselves, not in the light in which our own selfish passions are apt to place us, but in the light in which any other citizen of the world would view us” (136). In place of such stoical efforts, Smith advocates the cultivation of “that extraordinary sensibility, which we naturally feel for the misfortunes of our nearest connections” (137), and suggests that such proper sensibility is better cultivated through the study of literature than through the “metaphysical sophisms” of classical philosophy: “The poets and romance writers, who best paint the refinements and delicacies of love and friendship, and of all other private and domestic affections, Racine and Voltaire, Richardson, Marivaux, and Riccoboni, are, in such cases, much better instructors than Zeno, Chrysippus, or Epictetus” (137). Smith prescribes the
sentimental, epistolary novel precisely because it does not portend the instruction of universalistic, cosmopolitan philosophy.

Smith’s rejection of cosmopolitan philosophy hinges upon his understanding of sympathy as that which is dictated by extant relationships and obligations. Duties and sympathies alike, he suggests, materially end with “country”: “The state or sovereignty in which we have been born and educated, and under the protection of which we continue to live, is, in ordinary cases, the greatest society upon whose happiness or misery our good or bad conduct can have much influence” (229). The state that protects the individual is also the state that the individual can affect. Smith dismisses attempts to sympathize on a cosmopolitan scale because he understands sympathy to be dependent on such mutual “influence”: only if you can claim universal influence, his logic would propose, can you go on to claim universal sympathy. Otherwise, he argues against the idea that we must feel “extreme sympathy with misfortunes which we know nothing about” (Smith 135). “The care of the universal happiness of all rational and sensible beings,” proclaims Smith, “is the business of God” (238). “To man is allotted a much humbler department,” he concludes: “the care of his own happiness, of that of his family, his friends, and his country” (238). For Smith, God may love “the citizen of the world,” but between “one citizen of the world” and another, there is no relationship worthy of the name and so no basis for substantive sympathetic engagement.

This is not to say that, for Smith, sympathies are indelibly fixed in the domestic and national spheres. In fact, Smith avers that sympathies change with habit. He understands this potential for change, however, not as an opportunity for extending sympathy but as a circumstance that might disrupt proper social order. Consequently, for those seeking “domestic happiness,” he recommends against an education that takes members of the family very far from
home (223). “The education of boys at distant great schools, of young men at distant colleges, of young ladies in distant nunneries and boarding-schools,” he writes, “seems in the higher ranks of life, to have hurt most essentially the domestic morals, and consequently the domestic happiness, both of France and England” (223). For Smith, reading together is an excellent way of finding pleasure in mutual sympathy (8). A public education that leads one to sympathize with others outside one’s immediate domestic sphere might nurture any number of bold new ideas. It does so, however, only at the risk of losing “dutiful children” for “want of habitual sympathy” (223-24). Similarly, we might presume that, for Smith, a cosmopolitan education that brings one into habitual sympathy with those beyond one’s national borders occurs only at the risk of losing dutiful neighbours or dutiful citizens. A cosmopolitan education seems practicably harmful to domestic relationships in a way that Smith cannot abide: “The most sublime speculation of the contemplative philosopher can scarce compensate the neglect of the smallest active duty” (238). Smith’s sympathy directs that passions be brought into the service of such active, extant duty as further mutually beneficial relationships.

Much of contemporary cosmopolitan theory contravenes Smith by suggesting that the age of globalization has expanded the scope of those on whom “our good and bad conduct can have much influence,” even as international capital and environmental degradation have affected crises of the nation-state.3 In envisioning the de facto existence of a global society, cosmopolitan thought tends to follow the work of Immanuel Kant, for whom our very existence in the world creates an inescapable sociability, encapsulated in and furthered through international commerce and culture (Cheah, Inhuman 81). In his 1795 tract, “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch,” Kant argues that because “[t]he peoples of the earth have…entered in varying degrees into a

3 See Robert Fine and Robin Cohen’s “Four Cosmopolitan Moments” (2002) for one example of scholarship that argues globalization necessitates cosmopolitanism.
universal community…a violation of rights in one part of the world is felt everywhere” (107-108). An assumption of global mutuality forms the basis for Kant’s cosmopolitanism, which he defines as the right to “conditions of universal hospitality” and upholds as a necessary precondition for the rational advancement of perpetual peace (Kant 105). A presumed human community necessitates sympathy for the suffering of distant others and the consequent pursuit of an international cosmopolitan order.

Whereas Smith recommends the reading of literature because it counters the cosmopolitan tendency to discount that we “naturally” feel more for those who can most affect our happiness, Kant embraces literature because he believes in its potential to forward his cosmopolitan project. As Kant himself acknowledges, “the kind of philosophical history he is advocating amounts ultimately not to some kind of statistical analysis but to a ‘novel’” (Earle 212; emphasis in original). This Kantian “novel,” as Bo Earle argues, is one that imaginatively engages with “behavioral trends of the human species in aggregate” and represents them as moving towards a yet-to-be realized “cosmopolitan end” (210). Kantian cosmopolitan philosophy, by offering a narrative that describes a common humanity, “provocatively directs us out into the unromantic world of hard empirical and even statistical data for redemption of our Romantic ideals” (Earle 210). And indeed, Kant’s claim that the humanities can cultivate humanity by developing “the universal feeling of sympathy, and the ability to engage universally in very intimate communication” (Kant qtd. in Cheah Inhuman, 1; emphasis in original) finds

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4 For an interrogation of the implicit limits, exclusions, and perversions of a Kantian universal law of hospitality, see Derrida’s On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness (2001). I discuss the Derridean analysis of Kantian cosmopolitanism at length in Chapter 5.

5 Earle cites Kant’s “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose” (1784).

6 In this respect, if scholars have “often posited” a tension between Romanticism—“often defined now by rampant individualism, now by rising nationalism”—and cosmopolitanism, it is yet significant that “the words ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘cosmopolitanism’ entered the English language in the early nineteenth century” (Heydt-Stevenson and Cox 130).
resonance in Shelley’s proclamations that poetry can strengthen “a man[’s]” capacity to be “greatly good” by encouraging “him” to take on “the pains and pleasure of his species” (844). For both the philosopher and the poet, the imagination is capable of world-making: the writer apprehends a common humanity and transmits this insight through prose or poesy. A sympathetic imagination that is cosmopolitan in scope emerges as a means to cultivate a cosmopolitan community in practice.

Smith and Kant respectively suggest that novels cultivate those human sympathies that are antithetical to cosmopolitanism, and that novels cultivate the sympathy for humanity that is a precondition for the realization of cosmopolitanism. Both thinkers, however, maintain that literature evidences something essential about human sympathy. For Smith, literary sentiment exemplifies how humans do not feel sympathy on the basis of an abstract idea of shared humanity. For Kant, literature exemplifies, through its very circulation via sympathetic engagement, the fact of a shared humanity. In both cases, the possibility of cosmopolitan community hinges on if and how sympathy comprehends “the human.” This project argues that assumptions about the nature and scope of “human” sympathy continue to define models of cosmopolitan reading and, by extension, of cosmopolitan community. By making such assumptions explicit, I suggest, we might better understand how current cosmopolitan theory delimits the “human.”
Models of human sympathy continue to play a central role in accounts of the potential value of a literary education for the cultivation of cosmopolitan community. Martha C. Nussbaum and Kwame Anthony Appiah are perhaps the two moral philosophers and literary critics who, in the past twenty years, have most prominently connected novel reading with cosmopolitan practice. Both of these thinkers have imagined human sympathy as cosmopolitan in its scope. They have done so, however, in markedly different ways. While Nussbaum argues, *pace* Smith, that sympathy *can* be cultivated to embrace all of humanity, Appiah suggests, *pace* Kant, that humanity can *already* be defined as cosmopolitan because of a universal capacity to sympathize.

Nussbaum defines cosmopolitanism primarily as a moral project that is critical of isolationism and requires the cultivation of sympathy beyond existing national boundaries. “Most of us are brought up to believe that all human beings have equal worth…but our emotions don’t believe it,” writes Nussbaum (*Love*, xii). Reading literature, she posits, is one way to overcome this problematic “emotional narrowness” and to create a citizenry that feels responsibility to all humankind. The novel’s very form, Nussbaum argues, “constructs

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7 Claims that the reading of novels potentially contributes to the cultivation of a specifically cosmopolitan civic virtue can be read in light of a more general contemporary propensity to issue a defense of literature by extolling the virtues of the sympathetic imagination. As Sophie Ratcliffe notes in *On Sympathy* (2008), “[i]n the last decade, there have been many general claims made in relation to literature and its power to evoke sympathy, and about the relations between the idea of sympathy and empathy and the idea of goodness” (225). “[T]here is something of a ‘vogue for empathy,’” argues Ratcliffe, “a fuzzy but general assumption that expressing sympathy or empathy, and engaging in purportedly ‘empathetic’ literary encounters, may encourage civic virtue and liberal humanitarianism” (5). Of course, Ratcliffe concludes, “[t]o say that this is unlikely is to say nothing new” (5).

8 In highlighting the role of literature in cultivating transnational sympathy, Nussbaum implies that, within the United States, at least, there is an especially notable lack of sympathy for other humans living outside national borders. As her preface for the new edition of *For Love of Country?* (2002) makes clear, Nussbaum’s call for cosmopolitanism responds particularly to the dehumanization of non-nationals during wartime. Her argument does not address the dehumanization of fellow-citizens.
compassion in readers, positioning them as people who care intensely about the sufferings and bad luck of others, and who identify with them in ways that show possibilities for themselves” (Poetic 66). An education that presents “lives outside our [national] borders” as “deep, rich, and emotion-worthy” consequently works to “renew our commitment to the equal worth of humanity” (Nussbaum, Love xiv). As such, a “cosmopolitan education” not only helps us to “learn more about ourselves,” but also allows us to “make headway solving problems that require international cooperation” and to “recognize obligations to the rest of the world that are real and that otherwise would go unrecognized” (11-12). Nussbaum’s cosmopolitans understand that “they are, above all, citizens of a world of human beings” (6).

Against Nussbaum’s vision of aspirational moral community that is critical of a perceived status quo, Appiah defines cosmopolitanism primarily in terms of an extant ontology that accounts for already existing sympathies that cross national boundaries. Appiah proposes that the practice of cosmopolitanism does not so much require agreement about moral principles—such as the equal worth of all human beings—as “dialogue among difference” and “conversations among places” (“Cosmopolitan” 207; 225). Cosmopolitanism, argues Appiah, “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, association” (Cosmopolitanism xix). Such “habits of coexistence,” argues Appiah, are made possible through the sympathetic imagination—through “the capacity to follow a narrative and conjure a world” (“Cosmopolitan” 224). Whereas Nussbaum views reading literature as a means for extending sympathy beyond

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9 Nussbaum is by no means alone in her understanding of the novel, and the realist novel especially, as that which potentially engenders sympathy in readers. For example, Patrick Hayes, in his discussion of Jürgen Habermas’s The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, highlights how Habermas “regards the novel in particular as one of several institutions within the public sphere that helps to bring about, in a strongly affective way, an ideal of human community grounded in the transcendence of difference” (18).
national borders, Appiah views it as the exercise of an extant cosmopolitan sympathy. “What makes the cosmopolitan experience possible,” writes Appiah, what “grounds our sharing,” is “the grasp of narrative logic that allows us to construct the world to which our imagination responds” (“Cosmopolitan” 223). For Appiah, our capacity “to respond in imagination to narratively constructed situations” (223), our ability to read with “sympathy and concern for others” (203), makes cosmopolitans of us all—even as the novel, as a standing invitation to exercise the “narrative imagination” (223), “is cosmopolitan in its very beginnings” (203). Novel reading exercises what Appiah sees as the quintessentially human sympathy that binds us in an extant cosmopolitan community. Appiah’s cosmopolitans are not necessarily united by the fellow-feeling and shared principles that are often implied by the term citizenship; rather, Appiah insists, among cosmopolitans, “the world we imagine is more than a world of fellow-citizens” (202).

Nussbaum and Appiah argue, respectively, that the reach or existence of the sympathetic imagination determines the possibility of cosmopolitan practice. Both of these visions of universal cosmopolitan sympathy have been placed under critical scrutiny. Homi Bhabha, notably, has critiqued Nussbaum’s vision of a self that privileges a liberal conception of “humanity” before other, more local loyalties (Bhabha, “Unsatisfied”). “The usual argument against Nussbaum’s version of cosmopolitanism,” writes Bruce Robbins (echoing Adam Smith), “is that we cannot possibly be expected to care about those far away as intensely as we care about our families” (“Cosmopolitanism” 53). In demanding the universal cultivation of sympathy for all humankind, Nussbaum’s cosmopolitanism demands the universalization of the liberal humanist
subject. Consequently, “the older, singular, Nussbaum-style cosmopolitanism is now regularly dismissed as universalism in disguise” (Robbins, “Cosmopolitanism” 48).

Appiah, in contrast, strikes an “attractively ‘conversational’ balance between universal demands and local particularities” (Bongie 58), suggesting that cosmopolitanism can be practiced in different ways in different localities. The assumption, however, of a humanity that is essentially cosmopolitan in its capacity to sympathize with “others” who “are down the street today or across oceans or centuries from ourselves” risks a certain complacency (Appiah, “Cosmopolitan” 224). As Chris Bongie, building on the work of Peter Hallward, argues, Appiah tends to conflate a “descriptive assessment of culture”—as cosmopolitan and hybrid—with “prescriptive political practices” (58). Robbins similarly notes in Appiah a problematic elision of cosmopolitan culture and substantive politics. There is “continuity” between Appiah’s notion of “getting used to” and a “more general liberal presentism,” Robbins suggests (“Cosmopolitanism” 56). The notion of an ongoing, cosmopolitan cultural exchange constructs “a temporality that quietly urges us to go easy on the imperial horrors of the past” and “is credited with almost supernatural ability to resolve the contradictions of the present and future, or at least to get used to them” (Robbins, “Cosmopolitanism” 57). Whereas Nussbaum’s prescription of sympathy risks articulating a cosmopolitan politics premised on an abstract universal sympathy, Appiah’s description of sympathy risks depoliticizing cosmopolitanism. Such critiques question whether

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10 While Smith does not proclaim a moral obligation to humanity as such, his theory of sympathy is vulnerable to a critique of universalism similar to that leveled against Nussbaum, insofar as Smith’s sympathizing subject is implicitly masculine, ‘rational’, and individualist (cf. Hinton 27).
11 Critiques of Appiah echo those of Kant, even though Appiah’s view of cosmopolitanism is less teleological. In suggesting that current politics, commerce, and culture are all part of the path to perpetual peace, Kant’s elucidation of an inexorable path to a cosmopolitan condition problematically “offers the consolation of philosophy for the violence and suffering in the existing world” (Fine and Cohen 159), even as the suffering engendered by colonialism and imperialism has “disproved Kant’s benign view of the unifying power of international commerce and discredited the moral-civilizing claims of cosmopolitan culture” (Cheah, Inhuman 81).
and how human sympathy can be conceived in cosmopolitan terms. The question of whether and how sympathy can be conceived as “human” remains relatively untouched. As I will demonstrate, the tendency to query the limits and potentials of human sympathy is strongly present in current debates about cosmopolitanism. Such debates might be further refined, however, by questioning if and how sympathy is “human” at all.

1.iii Beyond the Novel: Sympathy and Cosmopolitanism

Despite these risks, the theories of sympathy proffered by Nussbaum and Appiah resonate broadly throughout cosmopolitan theory, within which a general divide can be described that parallels Nussbaum and Appiah’s different ways of extrapolating a distinctly cosmopolitan sympathy. On the one hand, advocates of what might be termed “critical cosmopolitanism”\(^\text{12}\) suggest that cosmopolitan sympathy that apprehends how the other is “fully human” potentially contributes to more just negotiations within existing international institutions, which have erstwhile tended towards a universalizing rationalist discourse. On the other hand, advocates of what might be termed “affective cosmopolitanism” argue that cosmopolitan sympathies that describe a variety of international associations could offer salutary alternatives to existing international institutions, which, they also argue, rely problematically on Enlightenment

\(\text{12}\) “Critical cosmopolitanism” has been coined before by Paul Rabinow, Rebecca Walkowitz, and Paul Mignolo. Their definitions differ from each other and from my own. Rabinow defines “critical cosmopolitanism” as that cosmopolitanism that is “suspicious of its own imperial tendencies” (258); Walkowitz similarly takes “critical cosmopolitanism” to encompass both “critical theory” and a “critique of critique” (Cosmopolitan 3); and Mignolo uses “critical cosmopolitanism” to refer to a cosmopolitanism formulated from the “perspective of coloniality” (723). I use the term more broadly, to refer to a cosmopolitanism that imagines sympathy as concomitant with self-aware judgment.
universalisms. In both cases, the propagation of cosmopolitan sympathy purportedly contains the potential for engendering greater equality.¹³

Proponents of critical cosmopolitanism argue that actively cultivating sympathy, as prescribed by Nussbaum, is in fact a means to counter the universalizing, rationalist tendencies that have attended international governance. David Rose, for example, argues that “[i]n legitimating international law, a reliance on universal good or rights leads to either empty agreement or simple non-agreement; whereas, a reliance on substantive conceptions of the good leads to relativism and non-agreement” (49). Rose proposes that international law would consequently benefit from a “cosmopolitics” that requires that one initially seek to imagine holding the “substantive values” of others, whereby one might achieve a “true comprehension” of oneself and the other through open dialogue and the interrogation of one’s own standards of reason (51). Such sympathetic acts, argues Rose, by troubling the ostensible rationality of existing formulations of international rights and duties, might better lead to plausible answers to the question of what way of life would be intelligible and acceptable to world citizens. David Held similarly implies that the sympathetic imagination is a way to work towards the just mediation of international disputes: “Political agents who can ‘reason from the point of view of others’ are better equipped to resolve, and resolve fairly, the challenging transboundary issues that create overlapping communities of fate” (58). Held, like Rose, maintains that sympathy works against claims to universal reason by revealing the contingency of reason itself. Critical cosmopolitanism

¹³ Cosmopolitanism, like multiculturalism, is arguably involved in negotiating two different strains of egalitarian impulses that are legacies of Enlightenment thought. In Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition (1994), Charles Taylor discusses the “politics of equal dignity” and the “politics of difference” as two political goals that derive from a more general political ideal of “equal recognition.” For an excellent précis of Taylor’s arguments, see Patrick Hayes, J.M. Coetzee and the Novel: Writing and Politics After Beckett (2010), pages 11-29.
promises to mitigate the exclusivity borne of claims to “reason” and thereby to create more inclusive forums for international politics.

Critics of critical cosmopolitanism question whether it in fact fulfills these promises. At worst, critics have suggested that critical cosmopolitanism’s claims to an expansive sympathy function as a rhetorical blind for the imperial character of current international relations. Timothy Brennan argues that cosmopolitanism is a “miasmic mood” with an “ethical aura” that is exported by western intellectuals and that supports structures and policies of imperial American globalization (208-12), while Pheng Cheah argues that cosmopolitanism, like the human rights discourse with which it is closely associated, is an attempt to give a more humane face to processes of globalization (Cheah, Inhuman). At best, even proponents of cosmopolitanism have suggested that critical cosmopolitanism remains highly theoretical. “[M]ost versions of cosmopolitan theory,” writes Craig Calhoun, “share with traditional liberalism a thin conception of social life, commitment and belonging. They imagine society—and issues of belonging and social participation—in a too thin and casual manner” (95). As Kok-Chor Tan suggests, there is reason to be sceptical that “the sense of solidarity and common sympathies and fellow-feelings that are the preconditions of civil society can be engendered globally” (168-69).

Attentive to such critiques of an abstract, quintessentially liberal cosmopolitanism, proponents of affective cosmopolitanism, like Appiah, imagine cosmopolitan community as a network of extant sympathies that cross national boundaries. Sociologist Ulrich Beck describes the “reality” of cosmopolitanism in terms of a “cosmopolitan common sense” that he also terms the “globalization of emotions” (69; 5). This “banal cosmopolitanism,” he insists, does not “herald the first rays of universal brotherly love among peoples” (Beck 10; 13). Rather, this cosmopolitanism describes how “the spaces of our emotional imagination have expanded in a
transnational sense” (6). In other words, cosmopolitanism marks our growing capacity to imagine ourselves in engaged conversation with distant others. Like Beck, cultural theorist and literary critic Bruce Robbins suggests that there are ways of feeling beyond the nation—of feeling “thickly,” in a “dense, embodied” manner (Robbins, *Feeling* 172)—that yet do not depend upon a universal sympathy for humanity. Robbins calls those particular sympathies that describe specific global relationships and obligations, and that together constitute the global political field, “actually existing cosmopolitanisms” (Robbins, “Introduction” 3). Cosmopolitan sympathies, for Robbins as for Beck, describe how transnational political differences are imagined, felt, and negotiated in ways that are not premised on an abstract conception of “human” community.

Affective cosmopolitanism does not promise mutual consensus in international debates—quite the contrary: it denotes different ways of conceiving of and experiencing those debates. At the same time, theorists suggest that attentiveness to multiple cosmopolitanisms is valuable precisely because it offers the possibility of thinking about international politics outside of existing, hegemonic institutions and liberal conceptions of right. Scott L. Malcomson supports what he terms Robbins’ “cosmopolitanism of humility” in part because “those outside the West have a far greater self-interest in true—that is, non-imperial (and non-‘rational’) cosmopolitanism” (236; 262). In *Cosmopolitanism* (2002), Carol A. Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, and Dipesh Chakrabarty similarly highlight the dialectical value of “capturing the wider range of cosmopolitan practices that have actually existed in history” (Breckenridge et al. 10). “Cosmopolitanism,” claim the editors, “is infinite ways of being”; to understand this is to radically rethink the notion of culture as “diffused from a center” (12).

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14 Beck’s “banal cosmopolitanism” should be distinguished from his formulation of a “new cosmopolitanism.” The former is a feeling, the latter an intellectual project. In Chapter 2, I discuss the latter as an example of “critical cosmopolitanism.”
other words, to understand, in a universal sense, that “we already are and have always been cosmopolitan, though we may not always have known it,” challenges European intellectual history that upholds the primacy of “modernity” in shaping international relations (12). By suggesting that modernity itself is the product of varied cosmopolitan exchange, the description of cosmopolitanism as universal, like the prescription of a universal cosmopolitanism, extends a vision of a more inclusionary and equitable international political field.

Like the vision of international politics propounded by critical cosmopolitanism, however, the vision propounded by affective cosmopolitanism has been subject to critique. Magdalena Nowicka and Maria Rovisco have maintained, with regards to the “great deal of research [that] has identified and described…members of transnational communities as ‘cosmopolitans,’” that “[t]he problem of treating cosmopolitanism purely as a social category to describe and analyse particular types of groups, is that the term is routinely used to refer to some kind of identity that singles out ‘cosmopolitans’ in opposition to ‘locals’ or ‘nationals’” (1). Cosmopolitan identity, they imply, must include to some degree “a genuinely felt moral commitment to the world,” if the term “cosmopolitan” is to retain theoretical and political clout (Nowicka 1). Pheng Cheah shares this concern and speculates that it may be “premature” to claim “existing transnational movements translate into actually existing popular cosmopolitanisms understood as pluralized forms of popular global political consciousness” (Cheah, “Introduction” 36). As proponents of affective cosmopolitanism suggest that all of humanity is engaged in negotiating international politics, it becomes difficult to identify what those politics, exactly, might be.

The argument presented in Cosmopolitanism resonates with Paul Rabinow’s definition of cosmopolitanism in “Representations are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology” (1986), which maintains that “we are all cosmopolitans,” even though we have “done rather poorly in interpreting this condition” (258).
Insofar as it has evolved to challenge the classical distinction between reason and sentiment, cosmopolitanism has become inextricably linked to sympathy.\textsuperscript{16} For many contemporary advocates of cosmopolitanism, both critical and affective, there is a general consensus that “thin” or abstract humanitarian principles that have erstwhile been attributed to a pure, universal “reason” are ultimately grounded in the “thick” experience of everyday feelings, habits, and loyalties.\textsuperscript{17} At the same time, however, the existence of a “thick,” distinctly cosmopolitan set of feelings, habits, and loyalties remains in dispute. Critics claim that critical cosmopolitan sympathy is not particularly “thick,” and that affective cosmopolitan sympathy is not distinctly cosmopolitan.

Aware of these critiques, some contemporary theorists continue to uphold the possibility of a cosmopolitan sympathy that neither articulates a politics that depends upon an abstract universal sympathy nor depoliticizes cosmopolitanism. Advocates of cosmopolitanism, such as Mica Nava, Seyla Benhabib, and Jonathan Rée, variously locate the origins of a substantive and distinctly cosmopolitan sympathy at the individual, national, and supra-national level. All are uncertain, however, as to how such sympathy might be engendered.

Exploring cosmopolitanism at the level of the individual in \textit{Visceral Cosmopolitanism: Gender, Culture, and the Normalisation of Difference} (2007), Nava turns to psychoanalysis (and its gaps) in her project of “[m]aking sense of the frequently unconscious dynamic underlying some people’s positive and inclusive perceptions of others and ‘elsewhere’—sometimes in the face of widespread racism and xenophobia” (63). Nava suggests that “committed opposition to

\textsuperscript{16} For a concise delineation of the relationship between “reason” and “sentiment” in moral philosophy concerned with universal justice, see Richard Rorty (1998), “Justice as a Larger Loyalty” in \textit{Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation}.

\textsuperscript{17} In my use and definition of the terms “thick” and “thin” to read cosmopolitan theory, I draw on a discussion of these terms by Rorty, who is referencing Michael Walzer’s \textit{Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad} (1994).
racism and a deeply felt sense of connectivity to others,” such that one will act against “dominant political and representational regimes.” “is also often rooted in non-rational unconscious factors” (64). Nava’s cosmopolitan sympathy describes a concrete cosmopolitan politics. However, her understanding of how unconscious factors engender cosmopolitan feeling is, she admits, “tentative and embryonic” (Nava 71). The potential within Nava’s theory for a widespread cosmopolitan practice is similarly uncertain.

Benhabib takes the modern nation-state as a starting point in her analysis of the possibility of developing an efficacious cosmopolitanism. In Another Cosmopolitanism (2006), Benhabib calls for the incorporation of cosmopolitan norms into the laws of democratic states. Cosmopolitan norms, which she defines largely in terms of human rights and a Kantian notion of universal hospitality, will best be institutionalized as a democratic demos becomes convinced of the validity of those norms. Benhabib suggests that the cosmopolitan sympathy that Nava locates in particular individuals might in fact become widespread enough to be institutionalized in national policy. However, as Robert Post notes in his concise introduction to Another Cosmopolitanism (2006), Benhabib does not theorize why we might expect demoi to internalize cosmopolitan norms: although Benhabib refutes Jeremy Waldron’s argument that mundane daily contact with transnational others will abet the acceptance of cosmopolitanism, she offers no alternative (5). The mechanism by which an efficacious cosmopolitan sympathy might be propagated among citizens of a democracy remains opaque, and the question of whether cosmopolitanism would be available to citizens living outside a democracy, or a functioning state, remains open. The strong suggestion that a particular model of statehood would need to be universally adopted for cosmopolitanism to flourish, however, offers potential, troubling support to imperial projects that seek to export so-called democratic values and institutions.
Jonathan Rée avoids linking cosmopolitanism with (inter)nationalism in his formulation of the promise for widespread cosmopolitan sympathy. In “Cosmopolitanism and the Experience of Nationality” (1998), Rée bypasses both the individual and the nation-state and looks forward to the overthrow of the political system, such that there would no longer be a tendency to “make a fetish of political form” (88). In Rée’s postnational world, “people could interpret themselves without any reference to the idea that their nation is their self” (88). What will bring about such an overthrow of politics, however, is unclear. Rée’s argument hinges less on a vision of the future than on a nostalgic and romanticized reading of a “premodern experience of cultural and geographic difference” that was “simply cosmopolitan” (88).

What, then, might contribute to the widespread development of cosmopolitanism that is both deeply felt and politically conscious? Among the most prominent answers to this question within cosmopolitan theory is one already addressed in this dissertation: reading literature. Recent literary theory has made arguments that both extend and differ from Nussbaum’s and Appiah’s, while yet arguing for literature’s potential to imagine, and therefore engage with, cosmopolitan community. Contemporary literary theory extends Nussbaum’s and Appiah’s arguments by suggesting that literature may promote or exercise cosmopolitan sympathy. It differs from these arguments by tending to argue for the cosmopolitan character of particular kinds of literature, be they modernist, postmodern, or postcolonial. For example, Jessica Berman, in Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Community (2001), argues that “modernist fiction challenges our ability to restrict social identity” and so “becomes an instructive narrative model of how we can begin to imagine community anew” (27). Rebecca L. Walkowitz, in Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation (2006), similarly maintains that “the modernist strategies of cosmopolitan writing have served to test and expand the critical methods of international
thinking” (27). Bridging modern and postmodern literature, Berthold Schoene’s *The Cosmopolitan Novel* (2009) suggests that “cosmopolitan novel[s],” including those written by contemporary British novelists such as Salman Rushdie, Kiran Desai, and Ian McEwan, “promot[e] an open and flexible practice of community that can accommodate the whole world” (21). Robert Spencer also cites Rushdie, along with Timothy Mo, W.B. Yeats, and J.M. Coetzee, in *Cosmopolitan Criticism and Postcolonial Literature* (2011), in which he argues that the “best products of postcolonial writing” embark on a project of “exploring and even instilling the cosmopolitan forms of relationship that would be required to create and legitimise a global society that has left imperialism behind” (3-4). Like Kant, these scholars find in the sympathetic imagination the power to “recast” the world (Schoene 186). The seeds of a practicable cosmopolitanism are planted in the reading of an exclusively defined cosmopolitan literature.

Questions within cosmopolitan theory as to the possibility of fostering an international politics that promotes greater human equality form an argumentative loop, ranging from the sympathetic capacity of individuals, through the circulation of sympathy in culture and politics, and then back again to the individual reader and the power of the sympathetic imagination. What is generally not in question, however, is the desirability of a perfectly conscientious, visceral cosmopolitan sympathy for furthering cosmopolitan political agendas, whether those agendas seek to negotiate more just agreements within existing international legal institutions, or to imagine alternative forms of international politics outside of those institutions.

Central to my argument is my proposition that this formulation of cosmopolitanism, which looks forward to the articulation and practice of a broadly defined yet deeply felt human sympathy, problematically limits the scope of cosmopolitanism. Within cosmopolitan theory, sympathy emerges as a means of apprehending or describing a common humanity. The models of
humanity proffered through the mechanism of sympathy, however, are arguably antithetical to the more equitable international relations that cosmopolitanism seeks to advance. That is, models of “human” sympathy, as articulated within critical and affective cosmopolitanism, arguably undermine, rather than promote, mutuality and equality. As I shall demonstrate in coming chapters, whether sympathy is imagined as a supplement to reason or as its antithesis, cosmopolitanism problematically delimits the capacities and influence of “other humans,” even as it idealizes the capacities and influence of the sympathizing cosmopolitan subject.

2. J.M. Coetzee and the Limits of Cosmopolitan Sympathy

In order to think through how models of sympathy in critical and affective cosmopolitan theory delimit “the human,” as well as how cosmopolitanism might be reimagined given these limitations, I turn in subsequent chapters to the recent fiction of J.M. Coetzee, namely those major works of fiction from Boyhood (1997) on.\(^{18}\) By reading Coetzee’s fiction and nonfiction in conjunction with cosmopolitan theory, I seek to articulate what remains to the promise of cosmopolitanism when it admits to the limitations of sympathy. Coetzee’s body of work allows me to situate cosmopolitan sympathy and its attendant promises of human equality within a particular postcolonial context, one that foregrounds the violence and inequality that continue to accompany the forced transculturation endemic to colonial and imperial projects. I justify my project’s focus on the second half of Coetzee’s oeuvre by charting how, on the one hand, this work both formally and thematically constitutes an extended and incisive meditation on sympathy and its limitations and, on the other hand, how this meditation is cosmopolitan in scope.

2.i J.M Coetzee and Sympathy

Multiple literary critical, philosophical, and even anthropological articles attest to the significance of Coetzee’s later fiction for current academic debates about sympathy. However, while these works often include some discussion of the pitfalls of sympathy, by and large they tend to move to salvage something of sympathy’s political or ethical efficacy. Geoffrey Baker suggests that interpersonal sympathy is “Coetzee’s middle road—a practical agenda for transformative action that occurs on a seemingly non-political plane” (29); Mike Marais, drawing on Derek Attridge, suggests Coetzee’s work reveals the ethical promise of reading as ek-stasis, which Marais argues is a kind of true sympathy characterized by a possession by the other (“J.M. Coetzee’s Disgrace” 89); and Ortwin de Graef reads Coetzee in order to argue that poststructuralist theory can work to reclaim sympathy and the imagination as that which is constitutive of an ethical position of “self-difference” (318). Martin Woessner perhaps makes the case most bluntly, suggesting that Coetzee’s fictions “push back the limits of our sympathies extending the space of our concern for others” (237). In its focus on the circulation of sympathy in Coetzee’s writing, my project is obviously indebted to these scholars. I seek to build on their work, however, in terms of both my focus and my methodology: I focus my discussion on the limits of sympathy in Coetzee’s work and draw on critical theories of emotion in order to do so.

My focus on the limits of sympathy in Coetzee’s recent fiction is informed by a reading of Coetzee’s treatment of sympathy over the course of his career. In Coetzee’s oeuvre as a whole, I identify a consistent, albeit increasingly qualified, skepticism towards sympathetic engagement with cultural others. Skepticism, as Ratcliffe notes, can be defined as a belief that we “cannot

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19 Besides the critics described in this paragraph, see Frances E. Mascia-Lees and Patricia Sharpe.
20 An important exception to this tendency is found in Sam Durrant’s “J.M. Coetzee, Elizabeth Costello, and the Limits of the Sympathetic Imagination,” which is discussed in Chapter 4.
gain sympathetic access to another” (33). Roughly put, Coetzee’s early work is remarkable for its representation of the “radical otherness” of post/colonial subjects (Graham, “Transvestitism” 232), and concomitantly for its profound skepticism with regards to the powers of the sympathetic imagination. From the black workers in In the Heart of the Country (1977) to the “barbarian girl” in Waiting for the Barbarians (1980) to Friday in Foe (1986), these figures of cultural otherness remain resolutely estranged from the protagonists who seek to sympathize with them. Coetzee’s characters tend to occupy two extreme poles: from the intractably self-absorbed Eugene Dawn and Jacobus Coetzee in Dusklands (1974) to the relentlessly “other” and marginalized protagonist in Life and Times of Michael K (1983). Neil Lazarus’s critique of postcolonial studies identifies a similar dynamic in Gayatri Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988). In Spivak’s seminal essay and “throughout postcolonial studies today [1999]” (115), argues Lazarus, “the actual contents of the social practice of ‘the people’ are always, indeed definitionally, inaccessible to members of the elite class” (114). Such a “conceptualization” of the relation between the subaltern and elite, he suggests, comes close to “fetishizing difference under the rubric of incommensurability” (115). Coetzee’s early fiction seems to approach such fetishization, insofar as alienation trumps and forecloses the possibility of sympathy between the privileged and the marginalized.

Against this backdrop, Age of Iron (1990) and The Master of Petersburg (1994) stand as transitional texts, insofar as both entertain, in different ways, the possibility of some sympathetic access to otherness, particularly through the reading of literature. The ideas of sympathy presented in these two novels roughly adhere to those found within critical and affective cosmopolitanism, respectively. In Age of Iron, which takes the form of a letter from the ailing Elizabeth Curren to her daughter, Mrs. Curren describes her trip to Guguletu, where she bears
witness to the murder of five children by the South African government: “Do not read in sympa
thiy with me,” she directs (104). “I tell you this story not so that you will feel for me but so that you will learn how things are” (103). How things “are,” insists Mrs. Curren, are that there are five bodies of “massive, solid presence in the burned-down hall” (104). In the disavowal and redirection of sympathetic impulses, Mrs. Curren suggests the possibility for engaging with the silenced, immutably dead bodies of which she writes. The possibility of an admittedly attenuated sympathy with “radical otherness” carries over into the novel’s narrative arc. While Mrs. Curren’s writing, like other first-person female voices in Coetzee’s fiction (including Magda in The Heart of the Country and Susan Barton in Foe) depends upon a “cultural other” for the “fulfillment of a particular discourse” (Graham, “Textual” 232)—Mrs. Curren’s letter to her daughter must be delivered by Vercueil, a “derelict” (3)—the contrasting, enigmatic silence of the “other” is, in the case of Age of Iron, mitigated by a degree of mutuality. Mrs. Curren comes to care for Vercueil, even as he develops an “undependable solicitude” for Mrs. Curren: “It is not he who fell under my care when he arrived, nor I who fell under his: we fell under each other, and have tumbled and risen since then in the flights and swoops of that mutual election” (196). While not an easy sympathy (caritas, Mrs. Curren notes, “has nothing to do with the heart” (22)), the relationship shared by Mrs. Curren and Vercueil, which is premised on the ineluctable co-presence of their mortal bodies, models, in some ways, the critical sympathy that Mrs. Curren exhorts from her reader, not for herself, but for those people murdered by agents of the apartheid regime (104). Coetzee is here, as elsewhere, “arguably ‘working through’ a deliberately solipsistic medium (that of postmodern fiction, with its reflexive preoccupations) precisely to illustrate the ethical and practical challenges of the individual existing in a broader society” (Abell).
The possibility of an alternative to intractable alienation is further opened, although not supplanted, by the theory of sympathetic reading proffered by Dostoevsky in *The Master of Petersburg* (1994). After the mysterious death of his son, Pavel, Dostoevsky debates with Councillor Maximov a scene in one of Pavel’s stories, which have been confiscated by the state after his death. While Maximov, in his role of judicial investigator, reads the story of the murder of Karamzin as a call to revolution, Dostoevsky decries the method: “Let me tell you then: reading is being the arm and being the axe *and* being the skull; reading is giving yourself up, not holding yourself at a distance and jeering” (47). This mode of reading, which Maximov condemns as a kind of “demon-possession” (47), suggests the serious possibility of an impassioned sympathy that exceeds rational self-control.

In both *Age of Iron* and *The Master of Petersburg*, Coetzee qualifies the skepticism evident in his earlier works. These two novels move towards a significantly messier representation of sympathy. While some kind of connection with others is possible in these works, it does not always have the salvific character that current scholarship on Coetzee’s representation of sympathy suggests. Mrs. Curren, after all, finds “no warmth” in Vercueil’s embrace (*Age of Iron* 198), while Fyodor Mikhailovich issues his defense of passion in the midst of the intense estrangement of mourning. My project aims to show how the possibilities and limitations of critical and affective sympathy introduced in these transitional works are developed in those later texts that foreground encounters with difference in a globalized world.

In pursuing this aim, and indeed in reading cosmopolitan theory more generally, I draw extensively on affect theory, a diverse body of scholarship that seeks to untangle the cultural, biological, and political import of feelings. Coetzee’s nuanced engagement with the self’s relationship to the other has long made his work of central concern for theorists working within
the “ethical turn” in literary theory,\textsuperscript{21} and literary critical discussions of sympathy in his work (such as those mentioned above) have tended to draw on thinkers who have become central to thinking ethics through literature, such as Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas. By bringing Coetzee’s work into dialogue with the “affective turn” in literary criticism, however, I offer a discussion of sympathy that takes as its starting point, not an analysis of feeling that seeks to delineate—and to some degree prescribe—an ethical attitude towards otherness, but rather an analysis of feeling that interrogates assumptions about what feeling is. In other words, rather than articulating how Coetzee’s fiction suggests an ethics of sympathy, I examine how the fiction questions, confuses, and tests the theoretical impulse to link morality with sentiment, or ethics with feeling.

Given that my project is concerned with teasing out assumptions about sympathy within cosmopolitan theory, it is important at this early juncture to identify some of my own assumptions about feeling. Within affect theory itself, even such basic terms as “affect” and “feeling” are admittedly fraught. As Anna Gibbs, among others, notes, “emotions” can mean something different from “affects,” and “affect” has several meanings in cultural studies alone (335). “Feeling” can mean something else again. Throughout the following chapters, however, I use the term “affective” and “affect” in accordance with the definitions propounded by Silvan Tomkins (1962-1992), whose work has become seminal to affect theory after being edited by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank as \textit{Shame and Its Sisters} (1995). Tomkins argues that affects are inextricable from—are nodal points of—both feeling (generally described as sensation) and emotion (generally associated with cognition). Similarly, when I use the term “feeling,” I echo Rei Terada’s definition of the term, wherein feeling “is a capacious term that

connotes both physiological sensations (affects) and psychological states (emotions)” (4). “Emotion,” concomitantly, “usually means a psychological, at least minimally interpretive experience whose physiological aspect is affect” (4). In sum, whether I refer to “feeling,” “affect,” or at times, “emotion,” I intend to denote an experience that is simultaneously psychological and physiological. Throughout this work, I follow Gibbs in resisting the possibility that “feelings” and “emotions” can be “substantially divorced from the materiality of the body” (337), any more than unconsciously registered sensations can be substantially divorced from cognitive processes.

The slipperiness that I assert exists between physiological sensations and psychological operations informs my analysis of the assumptions underlying definitions of sympathy within cosmopolitan theory. This analysis, in turn, suggests another fraught aspect of writing about feeling, to wit: in important ways, the experience of sympathy exceeds attempts to define it. A potential criticism of the current project is that there are moments when I use the term “sympathy” or “shame” when another term, be it “empathy,” say, or “guilt,” would arguably be more suited for identifying the feeling that I seek to describe.22 Such substitutions, however, depend upon one’s working definition of the alternate term, and I maintain that such definitions are as varied as they are for “sympathy” alone. There is a temptation in writing about feelings to attempt to establish a one-to-one correlation between terminology and affect; or alternately, to assume that one can define a feeling by identifying its various components. I take it for granted, however, that my account of sympathy (and of other feelings) is necessarily imprecise. My aim is not to offer a definitive definition of sympathy, any more than it is to offer a definitive definition

22 For an account of the relation between empathy and sympathy, see Lauren Wispé’s The Psychology of Sympathy (1991). For an account of the relation between guilt and shame, see Farid Abdel-Nour’s “National Responsibility” (2003).
of cosmopolitanism, but rather to explore the ways in which “cosmopolitanism” and “sympathy”
are mutually constitutive, in order to begin to understand the relation between them.

2.ii J.M. Coetzee and Cosmopolitanism

Just as I read the latter half of Coetzee’s work as engaging more explicitly with the
problems and promises of sympathy, so I read that same work as engaging more explicitly with
the processes of globalization to which contemporary cosmopolitan theory responds. In 1992,
David Attwell presented the plausible thesis that “Coetzee’s principal concern from The Life and
Times of Michael K (1983) to […] Age of Iron (1990) is the nature and crisis of fiction writing in
South Africa today” (Introduction 4). While Coetzee has repeatedly questioned the title of “South
African novelist,” the writing that Attwell identifies, along with Coetzee’s first two novels,
Dusklands (1974) and In the Heart of the Country (1977), consistently resonates with (even if it is
by no means limited to), apartheid South African history and politics. This “South African
writing” may be contrasted with the writing completed after Coetzee moved to Australia in 2002.
Within these books—Elizabeth Costello (1999, 2003), Slow Man (2005), Diary of a Bad Year
(2007), and Summertime (2010)—characters hail from six continents, and themes prominent in
cosmopolitan discourses, including global capital, human and nonhuman animal rights,
transnational connections, and migration, come to the fore. If the earlier texts interrogate “the
nature and crisis of fiction writing in South Africa,” these later works examine more fully what
Coetzee has called the “colonizing process” that is “the cultural arm of neoliberalism, of the new
world order,” or “the new global imperialism” (Coetzee, “Critic and Citizen” 111). According to

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23 In a 1987 interview with Tony Morphet, Coetzee states: “I sometimes wonder whether it isn’t simply that
vast and wholly ideological superstructure constituted by publishing, reviewing and criticism that is forcing
on me the fate of being a ‘South African novelist’” (460).
this rough timeline, *Disgrace* (1999), as Eckard Smuts suggests, “might be read, after the fact, as a farewell to South African localities” (65). I would add, however, that *Disgrace*, even as a “farewell,” is strongly concerned with how the “new” (post-apartheid) South Africa is negotiating intercultural pressures that are both intra- and inter-national in character.

By focusing on the ambiguous effects of sympathy in a globalized world, my project differs significantly from previous research that has read Coetzee through a cosmopolitan lens. This scholarship has tended to reinforce the current outlines of cosmopolitan theory, by implying both that Coetzee’s writing encourages a transnational sympathetic engagement with otherness and that it emphasizes ways in which sympathetic engagement already transcends national borders. Homi Bhabha famously lists Coetzee as an author whose writing “enjoin[s] the international community to meditate on the unequal, asymetrical worlds that exist elsewhere” (*Location* 5). More recently, Robert Spencer argues that Coetzee’s works “strive to galvanize their readers, to provoke them into purposeful introspection, and potentially to interpellate them as more self-conscious, more critical and more broad-minded citizens of the world” (3).

Katherine Stanton, in *Cosmopolitan Fictions* (2006), argues that *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace* demonstrate how South Africa is a product of global histories and attachments, and that this imbrication must shape our understanding of obligation, debt, and restitution to the “racial other.” While Bhabha and Spencer argue that Coetzee’s fiction highlights a moral imperative to engage with “distant” nations and cultures, Stanton argues that the fiction draws attention to existing transnational connections, which in turn demand that political and ethical actions be situated in a global context. Regardless of whether these critics conceive of cosmopolitanism as a critical project, an affective engagement, or both, they read Coetzee’s writing as espousing the cultivation of a sympathetic cosmopolitan community.
In contrast to studies of Coetzee’s cosmopolitanism that proceed by identifying his literature as exemplarily cosmopolitan because of its appeal to cosmopolitan sympathies, I invoke Coetzee in a study of cosmopolitanism precisely because so much of his writing challenges, through its representation of sympathy, the very basis for much cosmopolitan theory. Coetzee represents cosmopolitan sympathy, both as an individual political ideology, and as a visceral sense of transnational belonging. I do not, however, read these representations as working through how one ought to be in the world, or as describing an emergent way of being-in-the-world. Rather, I attach Coetzee to cosmopolitanism because his work insists on the particularity and contingency of transnational and intercultural sympathies. “I am not a herald of community,” avers Coetzee in an interview with David Attwell in *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews* (1992) (341). In their readings of this of-quoted claim, both Carrol Clarkson and Patrick Hayes point, respectively, towards the “historical situatedness” of Coetzee’s “limited and fallible” characters and to the “cultural situatedness” within which the author locates writers of fiction (Clarkson 190; Hayes 9). It is paradoxically in light of such arguments that articulate Coetzee’s attentiveness to the provincial and the particular that I argue Coetzee’s fiction might be understood as “cosmopolitan literature”: not because it demonstrates or generates a sense of fellow-feeling on a global scale, but because it demonstrates and generates a sense of the potential foolishness and fallibility of cosmopolitan sympathies. In certain regards, then, my methodology mirrors that of other scholars of cosmopolitan literature (such as Berman, Walkowitz, Schoene, and Spencer, discussed above), insofar as I read the work of a particular (post)modernist and postcolonial author as being especially resonant with contemporary cosmopolitan theory. I differ from these scholars, however, by suggesting that the substance of this resonance is not one that necessarily promotes critical or affective cosmopolitan sympathies.
This is not to claim that Coetzee’s work dismisses cosmopolitanism as essentially foolish. Clarkson argues that it is perhaps precisely because Coetzee’s characters are “not shining heralds of a new social order” that their narratives “carry extraordinary affective power” (190); Hayes suggests that Coetzee’s deferral of authority allows him the possibility of “holding open…different ideas of what constitutes a good community” (9). If Coetzee’s work suggests the limits of cosmopolitanism premised on human sympathy, it simultaneously extends the opportunity for imagining cosmopolitanism as that which is enacted by an imperfect humanity.

The remaining four chapters share a similar structure and methodology to this introduction. In the first half of each chapter, I develop my analysis of sympathy in contemporary cosmopolitan theory; in the second half of each chapter, I support and extend this analysis via readings of recent fiction by J.M. Coetzee. By reflecting on my initial analysis through recourse to a body of fictional texts, my project echoes and inverts the approach of Doubling the Point, in which Coetzee and his critic and editor David Attwell discuss Coetzee’s novels with recourse to his nonfictional essays and reviews. The volume, as Attwell articulates in the introduction, contains “a desire not to supplant the novels themselves,” even as it maintains the possibility that Coetzee’s “‘doubling back’” on his fictional and nonfictional writing “will involve more than mere repetition” (3). By bringing discussions of contemporary cosmopolitan theory into dialogue with Coetzee’s fiction, this project similarly experiments with the possibility that thinking through an idea across different genres enables conversations that are incommensurable yet complementary. Reading the critical discourse of cosmopolitan sympathy in light of the intimacies of Coetzee’s fiction allows me to gesture towards the ambiguous cosmopolitan value of sympathetic moments, while retaining the possibility that the fiction’s representation of
sympathy exceeds what is articulable not only in my critical discourse, but also that of other thinkers of cosmopolitanism working in a critical mode.

The following chapter focuses on teasing out how sympathy operates in critical cosmopolitanism. I demonstrate how the “object” of cosmopolitan sympathy within critical cosmopolitanism is rendered problematically passive, even as the sympathizing cosmopolitan “subject” within critical cosmopolitanism is exhorted to practice a relentless self-critique. This self-critique, I suggest, far from being opposed to sympathetic feeling, is built into the model of sympathy upon which critical cosmopolitan theory rests. This “cognitive-evaluative” model assumes the self’s capacity to strive for an ideal critical distance. In the case of critical cosmopolitanism, specifically, the model of sympathy in play maintains that personal feelings can be subjected to a critical, “rational” gaze that views the self, like the other, as but one member of humanity. Proponents of critical cosmopolitanism argue that such a habit of sympathy is potentially cosmopolitan in its scope, insofar as it can strive to view the self and other as equally human. However, through a reading of Coetzee’s fictionalized memoirs—namely Boyhood, Youth, and Summertime—I argue that the cognitive-evaluative model of sympathy potentially engenders in practice a sense of alienation from the self and “humanity” alike.

In Chapter 3, I return to affective cosmopolitan theory and examine the assumptions about sympathy upon which it depends. I argue that, whereas critical cosmopolitanism imagines culturally “other” humans as objects of cosmopolitan sympathy, affective cosmopolitanism objectifies cultural “others” as exemplary sympathizing cosmopolitan subjects. Once again, the very sympathy that is meant to further an understanding of human equality in the cosmopolitan sphere in fact perpetuates inequalities through the implicit and unequal distribution of rational powers. The cultivation or existence of the sympathetic faculty promises human equality, even as
models of sympathy that construct a passive or emotive “other” undo this aspirational equality. I go on to suggest that the intersubjective, relational model of sympathy that defines affective cosmopolitan theory is comparable to Adam Smith’s conception of feelings of “humanity,” both because it is embodied, immediate, and implicitly feminine, and because it presumes that the quality of selflessness inhering to this model of sympathy signals an “exquisite sympathy,” even as it risks a kind of madness. Through a reading of those works by Coetzee that include the character Elizabeth Costello, I suggest that Coetzee’s texts challenge both the benevolent character and feminization of this model of “humane” sympathy. I conclude that affective cosmopolitanism, like critical cosmopolitanism, sublimates the potential for shame that accompanies its formulation of a vulnerable, implicitly feminized humanity that is inherently open to difference.

Chapter 4 takes up an argument developed in the previous two chapters: that affective cosmopolitanism is like critical cosmopolitanism, insofar as both theories arguably depend upon models of sympathy that work to avoid or disclaim the experience of shame. I briefly outline a genealogy of the relation between cosmopolitanism and shame, which I then link to current formulations of the relation between shame and novel reading. Through a survey of contemporary cosmopolitan theories that uphold shame as an ethical response to otherness, I identify a tendency to reify shame as a quintessentially cosmopolitan emotion. While this tendency is informed by a desire to respect the “absolute alterity” of difference, I argue that it is nonetheless problematic for its static conception of feeling and its perfective ideal of the human subject. J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*, I suggest, qualifies the cosmopolitan potential of shame by representing and performing shame as that which, like sympathy, is relentlessly imperfect: just as sympathy
persistsently yields experiences of shame in Coetzee’s work, so shame is circumscribed by, and
generative of, experiences of sympathy.

In Chapter 5, I synthesize the different ideas of cosmopolitanism that have been
addressed in previous chapters and offer reasons as to why contemporary cosmopolitan theory
tends to focus on the cultivation or character of the individual feeling subject. I suggest an
alternate approach to imagining cosmopolitan community that focuses not on how the
cosmopolitan subject feels towards others but rather on how the cosmopolitan subject affects
others. To pursue this line of thought, I trace a brief genealogy of cosmopolitan visitation. I argue
that, whereas contemporary cosmopolitan theory tends to imagine the cosmopolitan visitor as
quintessentially benign and responsible by virtue of his or her cosmopolitan feeling, accounts of
the cosmopolitan visitor proffered by Immanuel Kant and Jacques Derrida cast this assumed link
between cosmopolitan feeling and cosmopolitan benevolence into doubt. I go on to read
Coetzee’s *Diary of a Bad Year* as suggesting a model of cosmopolitan visitation that mirrors—
which is to say, inverts—Derrida’s vision of cosmopolitan hospitality. Coetzee’s representation
of the cosmopolitan visitor, I conclude, might be extended to imagine a cosmopolitan reader who
continually negotiates the borderland of sympathy and shame.

Sympathy is both cosmopolitanism’s apparent strength and its great weakness.
Cosmopolitan sympathy extends the promise of an equal humanity in a globalized world. In this
way, sympathy is the means in contemporary theory by which cosmopolitanism continues to
extend the riveting idea of human equality. Within Stoic philosophies of cosmopolitan *apatheia,*
the recognition of an innate and universal equality follows from exercising *reason.* Such reason is
as much the purview of the slave Epictetus as the emperor Marcus Aurelius (Douzinas 153).
Within contemporary cosmopolitan theory, the recognition of an innate and universal equality follows from exercising *sympathy*, regardless of whether one is a slave or an emperor.

In the coming pages, I suggest the necessity of rethinking cosmopolitanism such that cosmopolitan sympathy is neither idealized nor denied. Coetzee’s fiction, I propose, in its repeated acceptance of humiliation in a world that often demands sympathy, offers an uncomfortable vision of cosmopolitanism, wherein the risk of shame runs concurrent with the pursuit of equitable cohabitation. The cosmopolitanism that acknowledges this risk does not depend (indeed, cannot depend) for its enactment on either the sustained, self-aware sympathy of critical cosmopolitanism, or an essentialized view of the human capacity to sympathize found in affective cosmopolitanism. It insists, rather, that one continues to live with the other despite feelings of ongoing barriers to sociality and communication, which themselves are often generated by, and generative of, sympathetic feeling.
Chapter 2

J.M. Coetzee’s Autrebiography and the Limits of Sympathy in Critical Cosmopolitanism

I have defined critical cosmopolitanism as cosmopolitanism that sees, in the cultivation of sympathy for others, the potential for yielding a heightened sense of transnational relationship and obligation, such as would arguably abet the felicitous negotiation of global issues in extant international institutions: critical cosmopolitanism imagines that “citizens of the world” can move towards more perfect understanding of their relationships with others through the practice of sympathy. Sympathy within critical cosmopolitanism, therefore, is a means to an end: it is an individual capacity that provides a basis for “reasonable” consensus-building that aims to be equitable and just. Insofar as reading potentially extends one’s capacity for sympathy, it has been suggested—most notably by Martha C. Nussbaum—that a literary education can nurture a critical cosmopolitan outlook that values the ideal of an equal “humanity.” At the same time, critics such as Homi Bhabha and Bruce Robbins have challenged Nussbaum’s contention that it is “reasonable” for the cosmopolitan to pursue the work that Adam Smith assigns to God alone: care for the happiness of “all rational and sensible beings” (Smith 238). Skeptics of critical cosmopolitanism more generally have similarly questioned the potential of sympathy to be cosmopolitan in its scope, suggesting, like Smith, that sympathy for “humanity” is currently too abstract to constitute a substantive sympathy, insofar as it lacks the necessary visceral sense of belonging.

In this chapter, I engage with the debate as to whether sympathy can or should be extended to others on the basis of shared humanity by questioning the assumptions that underlie
the model of sympathy deployed within critical cosmopolitan theory. I argue that critical cosmopolitanism upholds a cognitivist model of sympathy, one that sublimates the immediacy of feeling to a “higher” cognitive function. As it is imagined in the work of an already familiar figure—Adam Smith—sympathy is the purview of the eminently “rational” subject, wherein “rational” signals a commitment to achieving an ideal critical distance from one’s feelings. Through a brief survey of contemporary critical cosmopolitan theory, I argue that this theory’s adherence to the cognitive model of sympathy, in which feeling is given over to critical oversight, creates a tension within critical cosmopolitanism that is unacknowledged, yet simultaneously determinedly perpetuated.

This tension can be summed up as follows: while critical cosmopolitanism embraces sympathy as a form of feeling cosmopolitan, it also persistently proclaims that this sympathy is cosmopolitan precisely because it is perpetually critical. More specifically, on the one hand, theorists of critical cosmopolitanism oppose cosmopolitan practice to an academic culture of supposedly dispassionate critique, and they rhetorically embrace cosmopolitan “feeling” as a salutary alternative or supplement to current critical practices that refuse to admit feeling as a factor in their endeavors. On the other hand, critical cosmopolitanism nonetheless implicitly positions cosmopolitan sympathy as that which enhances the rational clout of critical cosmopolitan theory. In other words, critical cosmopolitanism counters arguments that maintain that appeals to sympathy are uncritical, by constructing cosmopolitan sympathy as that feeling which is critical of current practices of critique. Critical cosmopolitanism celebrates sympathy in part to foreground the rationalist assumptions of “other” criticism. In so doing, however, critical cosmopolitanism claims to be more reasonable than the criticism it ostensibly opposes.
Although critical cosmopolitanism therefore imagines academic discourse as its unfeeling other, critical cosmopolitanism itself rests on a model of cognitive control that subjects feelings to a critical project of constant surveillance (e.g., to the project of critical cosmopolitanism). The irony is rich: critical cosmopolitanism disavows a critical dynamic that marginalizes feeling only by disavowing its own affective motives. So, for example, while critical cosmopolitanism advocates a mode of reading that embraces sympathy—as opposed to a mode of reading that purports to expurgate feeling—it paradoxically does so only by positioning sympathetic reading as the more rational alternative.

I suggest that this rhetorical dynamic is particularly problematic because it renders the critical cosmopolitan project one that is inherently reasonable, even though it is precisely assumptions about what is “reasonable” that critical cosmopolitanism purports to uncover and rework. What is more, critical cosmopolitanism’s implicit reliance upon the cognitivist model means that it reifies both the subject and object of sympathy in ways that thwart the equity and mutuality that constitute the goals of critical cosmopolitan thought. Specifically, “rationality” is unequally distributed among the subjects and objects of critical cosmopolitan sympathy: on the one hand, critical cosmopolitanism imagines the sympathizing cosmopolitan subject to be ideally self-aware and relentlessly self-reflexive and, on the other hand, it imagines the object of sympathy—that is, humanity as a whole, or simply other human beings—to be passively acquiescent to the critical cosmopolitan project. Critical cosmopolitanism therefore undermines the very mutuality it purports to foster, not necessarily because another’s “humanity” (however defined) is too abstract to be an object of deeply felt sympathy, but rather because the model of sympathy upon which critical cosmopolitanism is based abstracts feeling into an ideal, self-contained form of knowing the world. A critique of critical cosmopolitanism might proceed, then,
not by considering how subjects might reasonably feel more or less cosmopolitan, but by thinking through how critical cosmopolitanism presumes the capacity to make such a reasonable decision and what the consequences of this presumption are for critical cosmopolitan practice. Such a critique would assume neither that the sympathizing cosmopolitan subject is ideally reasonable, nor that the object of cosmopolitan sympathy is inordinately passive.

In order to pursue such a critique and, in the process, to articulate how critical cosmopolitanism might be reconceived when its status as an implicitly rational project is thrown into question, I turn, in the second half of this chapter, to J.M. Coetzee’s trilogy of fictionalized autobiography (Boyhood [1997], Youth [1999], and Summertime [2009]). The trilogy, I argue, represents the existence of “uncritical” or “irrational” feeling in the critical cosmopolitan in a way that eschews claims to critical distance or cognitive oversight: the trilogy enacts that project which is promised by critical cosmopolitan theory, but is perpetually frustrated by its cognitivist framework. In so doing, Coetzee’s texts suggest how the critical cosmopolitan’s efforts to sympathize in such a way that feelings are subjected to a critical cosmopolitan project can, in themselves, be understood as a mode of feeling that exceeds conscious control. In other words, while cosmopolitan theory tends to employ sympathetic feeling in the service of producing cosmopolitan subjects who are ever more critical, Coetzee represents how a seemingly “reasonable” sympathetic feeling for others compels, eludes, and defines the critical cosmopolitan, who is represented by both the protagonist John Coetzee and the writer J.M. Coetzee.24 The feelings of the critical cosmopolitan emerge as phenomena that cannot necessarily be transformed into ongoing critique, but are rather instilled in the body through cultural practice.

24 Throughout the chapter, “J.M. Coetzee” and “Coetzee” refer to the living author. “John Coetzee” and “John” refer to the protagonist of Boyhood, Youth, and Summertime, with the understanding that the “John Coetzee” in each text is different from the “John Coetzee” described in any other.
Coetzee’s fictionalized memoirs suggest that critical cosmopolitan sympathy, as embodied practice, is not that which necessarily furthers the critical cosmopolitan ideals of equity and mutuality. On the contrary, Coetzee’s writing suggests how critical cosmopolitan sympathy can be characterized as a paranoid habit of feeling—which can be translated into, or learned as, a mode of reading—that reinforces faith in one’s own critical powers and engenders isolation. At the same time, Coetzee’s writing gestures towards how the “object” of this feeling can disrupt the subject’s sense of rational detachment by returning the critical gaze: the resultant experience of shame works against critical cosmopolitan disavowals of the ways in which others define the critical cosmopolitan self.

1. Critical Cosmopolitanism and Sympathy

Critical cosmopolitanism depends upon the individual’s capacity to evaluate and develop his or her feelings for others critically, in light of the fact that one is a member of a mutually dependent and quintessentially equal humanity: feeling is embraced, but only as it contributes to a critical project. This understanding of sympathy—as an aspect of critical thought that allows one to judge the individual’s relation to society—can be traced back to Adam Smith, whose lasting influence is perhaps most apparent in critical cosmopolitan theory in the work of Nussbaum. Nussbaum, like Smith, endorses what has been termed a “cognitivist” model of emotion, which has been critiqued as problematically retaining an Enlightenment understanding of feeling that privileges reason over embodiment. However, defenses of critical cosmopolitanism have attended to such critiques of the cognitivist model, positioning critical cosmopolitanism as in fact working against rationalist discourse. I argue that these defenses themselves nevertheless implicitly adhere to a cognitive model of feeling. By insisting on the critical import of sympathy, critical
cosmopolitanism not only reinforces the primacy of reason, but does so by reifying sympathy as continuously and perfectly cosmopolitan.

For Adam Smith, sympathy—or “our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever” (Smith 5)—is subordinated to and generated by “reason.” Reason, which Smith also calls “principal, conscience, the inhabitant of the breast, the man within, [and] the great judge and arbiter of our conscience,” is that which, “with a voice capable of astonishing the most presumptuous of our passions,” informs us that “we are but one of the multitude, in no respect better than any other in it” (133): reason dictates that “when we prefer ourselves so shamefully and so blindly to others, we become the proper objects of resentment, abhorrence, and execration” (133). In other words, if the “most presumptuous of our passions” would lead us even “to act so as to affect the happiness of others,” sympathy, or “fellow-feeling,” emerges only as these presumptuous passions are tempered by the rational recognition that “we are but one of the multitude.” Sympathy for Smith is a “moral sentiment” because it contributes to individuals’ capacity to judge critically their obligations to others: it is that which calls on the individual to see the self as one of many.25

The ideal of rational control denoted by the ever vigilant “inhabitant of the breast” has been a factor in Smith’s enduring legacy, both within critical cosmopolitan theory and elsewhere, and a prominent point of vulnerability for critique. With regards to the long-standing influence of Smith’s work, John Mullan notes that the conception of sympathy that discounts the operation of “natural” mutuality in favor of a “spectatorial scrutiny,” or an “impartial spectator,” renders

25 The recognition that “we are but one of the multitude” is not, for Smith, so much an exhortation to feel equal to others, as a call to recognize that our feelings are limited. By formulating fellow-feeling, or sympathy, as that which subjects “passions” to “reason,” Smith limits the scope of sympathy to those for whom it is “reasonable” to feel passion. What one ought to be feeling is dependent upon a rational awareness of how everyone is seen by every other: “As to love our neighbour as we love ourselves is the great law of Christianity, so it is the great precept of nature to love ourselves only as we love our neighbour, or, what comes to the same thing, as our neighbour is capable of loving us” (20).
Smith’s theory a watershed in Enlightenment thought. This theory of sentiment, along with the ancient Greek cognitive conceptions of emotion from which Smith draws (Nussbaum, Poetic 74), stands as a forerunner to contemporary “cognitive,” or “cognitive-evaluative” theories of emotion, in which cognition is always entailed in, and actually precedes, feeling (Ratcliffe 15). These cognitivist models maintain that feeling and thinking are related, but the cognitivist does not accept that “feeling is not, at some level, run by a rational program” (Wesling 19). It is precisely this “theory of emotional rationality” with which Nussbaum explicitly aligns herself—even as she argues against Smith by suggesting that cosmopolitanism is a reasonable project that does not necessarily diminish local attachments (although, she concedes, it may limit the “comfort of local truths” (73)). For Nussbaum, as for Smith, sympathy is that which clarifies how one stands in relation to others. As Nussbaum approvingly summarizes, the cultivation of appropriate emotions within the cognitivist view depends upon the subject’s capacity to both conceive of “a true view of what is going on” and to “omit that portion of the emotion that derives from…personal interest” (74). While Smith may dismiss the cosmopolitan cause as a hubristic attempt to do God’s work in caring for humanity as a whole, his model of sympathy, like other cognitivist models, nonetheless imparts to the rational, sympathizing subject deific powers to view the world from a critical distance.

While reliance on an Enlightenment ideal of impartial reason has contributed to Smith’s prominence, it has also made Smith’s theory, along with the cognitivist theory of emotion more

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26 Adam Smith is often contrasted to David Hume in this regard. Whereas Hume saw sympathy as a psychological mechanism that transmits feeling, Smith “repeatedly stressed the role of imagination in sympathy and acknowledged that the result is an illusion” (Wispé 29). In other words, Smith’s “ethics promotes an imaginative engagement not with what others are really feeling, but with what they ought to be feeling” (Valihora 145): sympathy is a mode of judgment. For Hume, in contrast, passion supersedes reason: “Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them” (Hume qtd. in Mullan 19).
generally, vulnerable to the critique of being “overly rationalist” and “inapplicable to allegedly spontaneous, automatic, or global emotions” (Jaggar 53). The cognitivist view of sympathy occludes the possibility that judgments are expressions of feeling (Ratcliffe 15). What is more, by privileging cognition over feeling and maintaining a hierarchy of faculties, it reinforces “the traditional western preference for mind over body” (Jaggar 53). This preference in turn corresponds with the rather un-cosmopolitan elevation of the masculine over the feminine, as evidenced by how Smith’s theory privileges the explicitly masculine ideal of reason (“the man within”) over feminized passionate feeling. By imagining sympathy as that which emerges when reason tempers passion, Smith and his successors, including Nussbaum—and, I will argue next, critical cosmopolitan theory more generally—to some degree perpetuate what Alison Jaggar has delineated as the masculinist “myth of the dispassionate investigator” (59), in which an individual is granted the capacity to distance himself from feeling in what Mullan characterizes as an act of “willed uninvolvement” (45).

With Nussbaum as a notable exception, much of critical cosmopolitan theory explicitly disavows the rationalist discourse that underlies cognitivist models of emotion. While I challenge this self-presentation, compelling defenses of critical cosmopolitanism proceed by positioning it as a salutary alternative to a rationalist intellectual culture that seeks to uncover “a true view of what is going on” and to identify and critically evaluate personal biases. For example, in her essay “Cosmopolitanism, Universalism, and the Divided Legacies of Modernity” (1998), Amanda Anderson notes that cosmopolitanism “often aims to foster reciprocal and transformative encounters between strangers variously construed” (269). As such,

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27 The gendering of “reasonable” sympathy and “passionate” feeling is discussed at greater length in Chapter 3.
[i]ts ethical values frequently result in a mood of optimism that contrasts rather sharply with the hermeneutics of suspicion dominating much work on the cultural left. Although this optimism can appear at times to shade into cultivated naïveté, it is often an acutely self-conscious departure from prevailing practices of negative critique.\(^28\) (269)

Anderson’s account defends cosmopolitanism as countering a prevalent critical culture that is relentlessly suspicious of its own objectivity. Rebecca Walkowitz similarly defines cosmopolitanism as working against dominant critical practices, insofar as her study of modernist literature, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (2006), suggests how cosmopolitanism “might involve thinking and feeling in nonexclusive, nondefinitive ways” (4-5). In *The Cosmopolitan Vision* (2006), Ulrich Beck also defends cosmopolitanism on the premise that it values the effects of non-rational “feeling.” He argues that the “charge that has always been brought against cosmopolitanism—its idealism (or ‘sentimental twaddle’)—can prove to be paradoxically dangerous when translated into realpolitik” (44). Beck proposes that “[c]osmopolitan ideas have not yet had the opportunity to exhaust their utopian potential”: to short-change those ideals might therefore undermine the project of apprehending a cosmopolitan reality (44). “What cosmopolitanism is,” writes Beck, “cannot ultimately be separated from what cosmopolitanism should be” (44). In all of these cases cosmopolitan discourse is distinguished by its apparent embrace of a particular form of positive, and even utopian, feeling as a way of engaging with the world.

Yet, even as these theorists uphold cosmopolitanism as a salutary alternative to critical practices, they subsume cosmopolitan feeling to critical practice. Anderson’s rendering of cosmopolitan “cultivated detachment” is, she claims, an “*acutely self-conscious* departure from

prevailing practices of negative critique” (269; my italics). Anderson thus embraces a seemingly uncritical “mood of optimism” in the service of critical understanding. Like Anderson, Walkowitz subsumes feeling to intellectual endeavor. For Walkowitz, cosmopolitan styles are defined primarily as “intellectual projects” (*Cosmopolitan* 7): the “nondefinite feeling” that she locates within particular works of modernist literature is valued as a “critique of critique” (3).

Cosmopolitanism is thus aligned with a quintessentially elitist modernist project. Beck also reconfigures the “sentimental twaddle” of cosmopolitanism such that it is part of an “idealism” that has undergone self-critique and emerged as more critical than critiques of cosmopolitan “sentimental twaddle.” Beck proffers a “new cosmopolitanism” that is ostensibly more reflexive than predecessors like “philosophical cosmopolitanism,” “analytical-empirical cosmopolitanism,” and “institutionalized cosmopolitanism” (17). “[I]deological self-criticism,” writes Beck, “is the criterion of validity of the new cosmopolitanism” (45; italics in original). Ideology is aligned with sentiment, but both are disciplined in “new cosmopolitanism” by “self-criticism.” Once again, sympathy is constructed as a capacity to see the bigger picture, to view oneself and one’s passions from a critical distance. By critiquing a culture of critique, Anderson, Walkowitz, and Beck also participate in it: by embracing the uncritical, they implicitly claim to be more critical. The subjugation of feeling to reason remains unchallenged.

The pattern is ubiquitous: critical cosmopolitanism embraces sympathy only when it is tempered by “relentless mental alertness,” “reflexivity,” and “self-criticism.” “How else,” asks Chan Kwok-Bun, “does sympathy, empathy, role-taking come about if not through self-cultivation…and continuing moral education?” (208); the acquisition of a “cosmopolitan attitude,” he writes, “is a lifelong, relentless labour at mental alertness” (208). The editors of *Cosmopolitanism in Practice* (2009), Magdalena Nowicka and Maria Rovisco, echo this call for
exhaustive self-reflection in advocating that “individuals and groups” should become “more reflexive about their experiences of otherness,” such that “people can actually become more cosmopolitan in ways that are both reflexive and emotional” (Nowicka 6; italics in original). Such calls for ongoing reflection signal the “pedagogical patience” that characterizes critical cosmopolitanism (Malcomson 236), as well as how this pedagogy depends upon “a rationalist view of the ‘human self,’” which Nussbaum has referred to as “our ‘neutral and natural condition’” (Ratcliffe 15). The feeling of sympathy, following the cognitivist model, is “seen as an aspect of human intelligence, derived from an emotional experience, which is in turn based on evaluating and appraising objects” and so “is a state which can be changed, developed, augmented, or manipulated, depending on those beliefs and judgments” (Ratcliffe 14).

Cosmopolitan sympathy for others is that which is paradoxically learned and taught through rigorous and ongoing self-criticism: it is a puritanical discipline that places the body and its affects under the scrutiny of a watchful, critical, rational self.

Critical cosmopolitanism, far from departing from critical culture in its disciplined consideration of feeling, is at the apex of that culture precisely because it allows for, even as it domesticates, seemingly “uncritical” sympathy. By self-consciously upholding the potential “naïveté” of cosmopolitan sympathy, critical cosmopolitanism adheres to a critical culture in which “our commitment to the critical also makes us want to embrace the uncritical once we see it as our blind spot” (Gallop 5). By simultaneously calling for the embrace and exhaustive scrutiny of such “uncritical” feeling, critical cosmopolitanism adopts “a kind of perpetual openness to further criticism,” which constitutes the kind of “reservation of judgment” that Michael Warner suggests is “one of the hallmarks” of the contemporary critical position (26).

Even as some critical cosmopolitan theory challenges the universalism of Nussbaum’s Kantian
subject, it exhibits an enduring faith in a movement towards the Kantian construction of critical reason, described by Walter Benjamin as “an esoteric term for the incomparable and completed philosophical standpoint” (qtd. in Warner 24). The implicitly masculine critical cosmopolitan subject is one who strives to include even his own feelings for others within his philosophical gaze: he shares with Smith what Karen Valihora calls the “dream of the objective view” (138).

Such enduring faith in the primacy of reason proves particularly problematic insofar as the cognitivist figuration of sympathy within critical cosmopolitanism undermines the vision of human equality that is central to critical cosmopolitan thought. That is to say within critical cosmopolitanism, sympathy is only cosmopolitan when the sympathizing subject reifies and idealizes the object of sympathy as quintessentially sympathetic, and when the sympathizing subject himself is reified and idealized as quintessentially reasonable. What is lost in critical cosmopolitan thought is what is lost in cognitivist models of emotion: a sense of unruly, possibly unpredictable, relational feeling. The cognitivist model of emotion that allows critical cosmopolitanism to adopt feeling as a part of critical cosmopolitan practice itself disallows a sense of visceral belonging. The cognitivist model demands a subject who does not feel passion uncritically, and an object of feeling who does not disrupt that critical capacity.

The cognitivist model, in other terms, lends itself particularly well to envisioning an idealized form of academic practice. Within critical cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitan sympathy is problematically rendered as the sympathy of the critical reader, for whom reading entails “a clear opposition between the text object and the reading subject” (Warner 20). The subject “has” a feeling that is directed towards an object that is subordinated to a rational project of apprehending others’ common humanity; the possibility that the subject is affected by the “object,” be it novel or neighbor, in a way that is beyond the subject’s cognitive control, is disallowed. Sympathy is
imagined as always cosmopolitan, and therefore as a valuable supplement to cosmopolitan reasoning, even as humanity is imagined as that which does not affect the cosmopolitan subject, because the cosmopolitan subject is bound to be inexorably sympathetic only in a cosmopolitan manner: humanity, that is, is not allowed to affect the sympathizing cosmopolitan subject in unanticipated ways that exceed rational control.

Of course, though the cognitive model disclaims the possibility, this certainly does not mean that the critical cosmopolitan subject does not in fact feel uncritically or in un-cosmopolitan ways, or that the object of cosmopolitan sympathy does not affect the subject in ways that might elude the subject’s critical capacities and cosmopolitan intentions. As Rei Terada argues, “there is no such thing as the absence of emotion” (Terada 13): “[i]n the discourse of emotion, specific emotions appear and disappear,” to be sure, but feeling constitutes a “recirculating infinity” (13). Even when one feels critical—when one is, say, scrutinizing one’s feelings for others—one has not stopped feeling. As we have seen, however, it is difficult for critical cosmopolitan theory to describe the ways in which cosmopolitan sympathy is uncritical, insofar as this sympathy is precisely that which is definitive of the critical cosmopolitan project. Cosmopolitan critiques of an intellectual culture that decrives the validity of feeling as a mode of critical thought are caught in a double-bind, wherein assertions of the value of cosmopolitan sympathy inexorably participate in the critical discourse that is the ostensible object of critique. Of course, my own critique repeats the work of critical cosmopolitan theory by positioning itself as a critique of critique (of critique). (So, though I may point out that feelings affected by others have indubitably shaped my analysis, to do so is only to subjugate those feelings to critical judgment.) In the case of critical cosmopolitanism, and in my own criticism, any attempt to acknowledge “uncritical”
feeling while outlining a critical project cannot but constitute an attempt to achieve critical distance from, to pronounce a “rational” judgment on, that feeling.

It is at this juncture that I turn to J.M. Coetzee and argue that his “fictionalized memoir,” a trilogy comprised of Boyhood (1997), Youth (2002), and Summertime (2009), represents and performs critical cosmopolitanism outside of a cognitivist framework that maintains the predominance of critical reason. I have argued that critical cosmopolitanism, like critical reading, operates by asking the individual to imagine the self and other from an “objective” perspective, such that, within cosmopolitan theory, the passions that mark the relationship between self and other become an object of thought. The protagonist of Coetzee’s trilogy, John Coetzee, has precisely this cosmopolitan habit of sympathizing with others in a way that imagines feelings at a critical distance; this practice of sympathy, however, yields a felt experience of mutual isolation opposite to what sympathy purports to create within critical cosmopolitanism, namely enhanced feelings of mutuality and equality. Critical cosmopolitanism is represented as an embodied practice that feels distinctly “cold” (Youth 168). At the same time, Coetzee’s work suggests that the paranoid practice of subsuming passion to reason—the legacy of Enlightened sympathy as articulated by Adam Smith—is not to be overcome through further critique. Feeling apart from feeling, rather, can become unselfconsciously habitual, affecting one’s relationships and one’s prose alike.

29 In reading the “coldness” of John Coetzee in terms of cosmopolitanism, I build on Bruce Robbins’ essay “The Village of the Managerial Class” (2001), in which Robbins suggests that cosmopolitan feeling within the cosmopolitan elite, at least, might be thought of in terms of a certain professional detachment that eroticizes cosmopolitan knowledge and skill. This feeling “may well seem cooler or more bloodless than certain other passions” (26).
Coetzee’s fictionalized memoirs are united by the subtitle, “Scenes from a Provincial Life.” As the subtitle implies, and as critics of *Boyhood* and *Youth* suggest via analyses that potentially extend to *Summertime*, John Coetzee can be read as a quintessentially provincial figure. As such, the texts may seem unlikely foci for a discussion of critical cosmopolitan sympathy. “Provincial,” after all, is primarily defined as “of or relating to a province of a country, state, or empire,” while its secondary definition means “having or suggestive of the outlook, tastes, character, etc. associated with or attributed to inhabitants of a province or the provinces; esp. (depreciative) parochial or narrow-minded; lacking in education, culture, or sophistication” (“Provincial”). The critical cosmopolitan project aspires to move beyond precisely such delimited loyalties and outlooks through a pedagogical program. I argue, however, that across Coetzee’s trilogy, critical cosmopolitan sympathy is a crucial aspect of the protagonist’s provinciality, as well as a point of continuity between protagonist and author: as a boy, a youth, and a man, John Coetzee views his passions from a critical distance in a mode that suspends judgment, and in an act that mirrors the self-reflexivity of J.M. Coetzee himself in the writing of his memoirs. This mirroring, while highlighting the cosmopolitanism of John Coetzee, also suggests the provincialism of J.M. Coetzee’s own *autrebiographical* project: both John Coetzee’s character and J.M. Coetzee’s fictionalized memoirs point to the insularity of viewing the self and the world from a critical distance. Far from engendering a heightened sense of equality, a sympathy that abstracts the feelings of both self and others into a critical problem yields the attenuated mutuality of paranoia and shame.

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30 *Youth* was published in the United Kingdom without the subtitle. *Summertime* has been published by Viking in the United States with the subtitle *Fiction.*
Current criticism of Coetzee’s trilogy highlights the provinciality of its protagonist. On the one hand, the association is geographic and political: the fictionalized memoirs can be read as the story of an artist whose writing flourishes upon returning to South Africa, former colony of the British Empire. On the other hand, “provincial” can also refer to the parochialism and narrow-mindedness of John Coetzee. Boyhood and Youth, as Dominic Head noted in 2009, tend towards self-parody (14-15), and this reading also applies to the later Summertime. Atwell similarly suggests in a 2002 interview with Coetzee that the “self-detachment” that possibly leads to a “diagnosing” of the “protagonist as belonging to a certain historical condition” is “very much in evidence…in the irony directed at the protagonist’s provincialism” (216). Coetzee himself agrees that David Attwell’s argument as to the first two autobiographical novels is “dead on target” (217). In this reading, the provincialism of the protagonist to some degree stands in contrast to the wider, more objective gaze of the author, who is lauded for his ability to view himself as an other. Derek Attridge describes how Coetzee’s style in Boyhood and Youth conveys this refined distanciation, which exemplifies “a subtlety of self-reflection beyond the scope of most autobiographies” (148):

The use of the third person implicitly dissociates the narrative voice from the narrated consciousness, telling us that this was another person—that we are reading, to use Coetzee’s term, an autrebiography, not an autobiography. At the same time, the use of the present tense both heightens the immediacy of the narrated events and denies the text any retrospection, any place from which the writer can reflect on and express regret about (or approval of) the acts and attitudes described. (143)

In this way, Attridge concludes, Coetzee avoids the endless self-reflexivity common to autobiographical confessions and places the onus of judgment on the reader, who is “thus implicated in the ethical web spun by the work” (143). 32 Coetzee, in this argument, achieves the ideal contemporary critical position of openness to ongoing judgment. 33

While Attridge writes of Boyhood and Youth, specifically, his argument can plausibly be extended to Summertime, which also displays a style characterized by distanciation, but through means other than third person present tense. While the opening and closing excerpts from “Notebooks” repeat the narrative form of Boyhood and Youth—albeit in more fragmented and incomplete vignettes—the majority of the text is comprised of a series of interviews with friends and former lovers of John Coetzee. As such, these narratives reinforce the critical effort to view the self as one of many: “John really was a minor character” in her life, insists Julia, one of the women interviewed in Summertime, and her words encapsulate a plausible critical project of the trilogy: to view the self as one of many (44).

While I agree that the trilogy works to keep its protagonist at a critical distance, I qualify these readings insofar as they tend to separate the “provincial” protagonist from the “critical” J.M. Coetzee—from the author who is critically aware of how he stands in relation to himself and others in the world. Alternatively, I suggest a strong continuity between protagonist and author, wherein the very habits of distanciation and open-ended self-questioning that comprise the stylistics of the trilogy are central to the protagonist’s life. These critical habits, like Coetzee’s

32 Lenta offers a similar extended analysis of the effects of the style of Coetzee’s texts. Focusing on the texts’ “free indirect discourse,” Lenta suggests that at times this style extends beyond the thoughts of the protagonist, and thereby includes an “immanent voice,” which urges the reader to look beyond the protagonist’s judgments and to judge the protagonist (164-66).

33 For critique of the methodology that yields this argument, see Pieter Vermeulen, “Wordsworth’s Disgrace: The Insistence of South Africa in J.M. Coetzee’s Boyhood and Youth” (2007). Vermeulen argues that a reading premised on Coetzee’s comments on autobiography in Doubling the Point (1992) is reductive and underplays the importance of the works as fiction.
texts, I contend, are cosmopolitan in character, insofar as they strive to place the self within a wider social context that includes cultural others. Yet, they are also an aspect of the provincialism that defines both the protagonist’s life and Coetzee’s *autobiographical* project. For John Coetzee and J.M. Coetzee, a cosmopolitan practice that is experienced as distanciation is not only cultivated: it is also a compulsion. That is, the trilogy represents, and the memoirs enact, the practice of maintaining a critical distance as a way of belonging that is far from “critical”: the cosmopolitan outlook that sympathizes with, but also feels apart from, cultural and political affiliations is not represented or performed as either a matter of reasoning or of refined fellow-feeling. Critical cosmopolitan sympathy is not a self-generated or self-contained attribute of the subject or author. Rather, in this trilogy, cosmopolitan sympathy describes a relation of the self to the self and to others, which is affected by others as much as by the self, but which paradoxically is experienced and expressed as isolation and self-containment.

The character John Coetzee’s tendency to sympathize widely while belonging nowhere is represented, from a very early age, as something that is beyond his conscious control. As a boy, John Coetzee finds that “for all practical purposes he ‘is’ a Roman Catholic” (18). This is because, when asked by a teacher at school whether he is “a Christian or a Roman Catholic or a Jew,” the boy, fond of the Romans, chooses the middle option (18-19). He is not one of the “real Catholics” (24). Rather, John Coetzee finds himself “choosing” a religion because his parents have not raised him in a particular religious tradition. The “real Catholics” at his school “nag him and make sneering remarks” (21). “[T]he Jews,” however, “do not judge” (21). “In a minor way he feels comfortable with the Jews” (21), despite the fact that his uncles and mother tell stories among which “flit the figures of Jews, comic, sly, but also cunning and heartless, like jackals” (22). As outsiders themselves, the Jews appeal to the boy who is not sure where he belongs: as
Ulrich Beck, Daniel Levy, and Natan Sznaider argue, as members of a “multi-ethnic society without territorially bound identities,” the Jews stand as the “cosmopolitan attitude personified” (115). What might be read as the boy’s own cosmopolitan attitude is derived, not from his own Jewishness, but from circumstances that lead him to reflect on his relative detachment from other groups. That is to say, the boy’s qualified sympathy for his Jewish classmates and for Roman Catholicism, as much as his estrangement from Catholics and Christians, marks a complicated set of relationships with his parents, extended family, and peers. Cosmopolitan sympathy, the episode suggests, is not a capacity, but a relationship.

At the same time, it is a relationship in which the sympathizer who relentlessly submits his feelings for others to critical scrutiny becomes increasingly focused on the “self.” In Youth, especially, Coetzee represents the habit of imagining the self as other (e.g., as Catholic but not really Catholic) as one that leads to “an attenuating endgame,” in which the protagonist is “playing himself, with each move, further into a corner and into defeat” (169). The focalized narrative of John Coetzee as a young man is riddled with question marks, as the youth constantly seeks to imagine others in order to better understand his place in the world, in what becomes a quest of “inward exploration” (11). Thus, John Coetzee longs to “not arrive in Europe a provincial bumpkin” (25). When he arrives in England, however, his powers of sympathy quickly inform him that “Londoners recognize him at once as another of those foreigners who for daft reasons of their own choose to live where they don’t belong” (102-03). It is precisely cosmopolitan sympathy that reinforces his estrangement.

What is true for England is also true for South Africa. While working as a computer programmer in England, an otherwise miserable John Coetzee “allows himself the luxury of dipping into the South Africa of the old days,” and he wonders if it is “patriotism” that “is
beginning to afflict him” (136-37). John Coetzee feels a longing for the Karoo, and then imagines this longing from the perspective of an outside observer. Consequently, his longing is abstracted into “patriotism” that, given the politics of apartheid South Africa in the 1960s, he feels it is not appropriate to embrace. John Coetzee has a tremendous capacity to imagine himself in relation to others from a critical distance; this same sympathetic capacity, however, is increasingly experienced as isolation.

The third installment in the trilogy explicitly connects the protagonist’s isolation with cosmopolitan practices and attitudes. The biographer and interviewer of Summertime describes his subject, John Coetzee, as “a man...who stood outside the state religion, whose outlook was cosmopolitan, whose politics was—what shall we say?—dissident, yet who was ready to embrace an Afrikaner identity” (238; italics in original). This description encapsulates much of the pathos generated by the character, whose longing for belonging throughout the trilogy is juxtaposed with his experience of being “alien and adrift...displaced and ambivalent” (Dooley 73). John Coetzee is a man who “stands outside,” however much he is “ready to embrace” belonging. He adopts a cosmopolitan perspective, even as he desires to be Afrikaner—an identity that, in its infamous associations with nationalism and racism, stands as a ready opposite to the cosmopolitan outlook.\(^\text{34}\) He is ready to feel passionately, but unable to exceed the bounds of habitual critique.

That this habitual critique is itself a way of feeling, however, is highlighted by the ways in which it shapes John’s relationships with others, and especially with women. If John Coetzee thinks of himself, or is thought of by others, as the rational, ostensibly “dispassionate” observer, this representation stands in contrast to the ways in which John Coetzee thinks about, or is

represented as thinking about, women. The boy, for example, dislikes how his mother thinks “so many different things at different times”: “Her sweeping judgments, born out of passing moods, exasperate him” (33). While the youth “believes in passionate love and its transfiguring power,” his attempts to love, like his first attempt to live with a woman, relentlessly end “in failure, in ignominy”: “He simply has not the energy…to pay attention to a woman who veers between euphoria and spells of the blackest gloom” (Youth 78; 10; 13). In Summertime, John Coetzee’s ex-lovers describe what it was like to live with a distant man: “he was not built for love” (48); “he was not human” (199); he was “disembodied” (198). While the texts in this way repeat the familiar binary of masculine rationality and feminine feeling, the repetition is superficial. John Coetzee may feel he is more critical, but the texts challenge precisely this knowingness through their self-parody and irony. Critical scrutiny emerges as synonymous with utopian sentiment: the boy wishes for perfection in his mother, the youth seeks a feminine ideal, and the ex-lovers in Summertime suggest the possibility that this propensity to abstract the “opposite sex” continues into adulthood. Julia suspects John was in love “with the idea of me,” out of gratitude for her courtship of him (65). Adriana suspects that he lusted after her young daughter and transferred the forbidden desire to the mother. John Coetzee may scrutinize his passions, but this scrutiny constitutes its own mode of idealized feeling for others.

This idealization of feeling via critical scrutiny in turn results not in enhanced understanding of others and the self, but in an atmosphere of mutual estrangement. This is perhaps articulated most explicitly in Summertime, wherein Julia and Adriana suggest that John failed to comprehend their own feelings, despite his avid concern to respect them perfectly. While John was with her, Julia suffered in a violent marriage; Adriana struggled to get by as an immigrant to South Africa. “[I]f,” speculates Julia, “he had allowed himself to be a little more
impetuous, a little more imperious, a little less thoughtful, then he might actually have yanked me out of a marriage that was bad for me then and would become worse later. He might actually have saved me, or saved the best years of my life for me” (60). “[W]hat I needed in Cape Town,” says Adriana, was “a facilitator, someone to make things easier for me” (178)—someone to help “steer…papers through the maze” (177). Adriana concludes: “If your Mr. Coetzee had offered us his friendship I would not have been so hard on him, so cold” (176). Coetzee’s abstraction of gratitude and illicit desire as an ideal love, claim the women, produces relationships marked by their mutual sense of estrangement. His ongoing project of self-critique—Julia notes that during her time with him, John Coetzee “had decided he was going to block cruel and violent impulses in every arena of his life” (58)—abjects uncritical, imperfectly controlled feeling yet still feels isolated and isolating.

John Coetzee’s compulsive self-scrutiny, read as a mode of utopian feeling, forms an analogy to the way in which the compulsive self-critique of J.M. Coetzee’s prose can be read as that which is relentlessly judged against an ideal intimacy and consequently feels both isolated and estranging. An exemplary passage towards the end of Summertime amplifies the critical dynamic explicated by Attridge in relation to Coetzee’s use of the third person present tense. Sitting for an interview with John Coetzee’s biographer, Coetzee’s colleague and former “liaison” Sophie Denoël offers this verdict on the author’s prose: “Too cool, too neat, I would say. Too easy. Too lacking in passion. That’s all” (242). She thus echoes a “prevailing critical image of J.M. Coetzee as an eminently unsociable writer of hypertheorized metafictions” (Vermeulen 180). In this instance, form reflects content: Sophie’s reading of “coolness” stands as another example of J.M. Coetzee’s critical stylistics. While still withholding explicit authorial judgment in this autrebiography, the author demonstrates that he can yet imagine judging the author Coetzee’s
prose as critically as, or more critically than, the critics, while still leaving that judgment open-ended. (One need only turn to the back cover of the 2009 Harvill Secker edition to find a reviewer from the *Irish Times* praising Coetzee’s “seething passion.”35) The metanarrative framing makes it difficult not to agree with Sophie that the author is “too cool”: the reader finds herself judging a critical verdict on the very writing she is reading by a character imagined by the writer of that writing. The levels of critique are patently overdetermined—while also potentially estranging to the reader in a way that leads to a critical judgment of the text that matches Denoël’s own. In the fathomless self-reflexivity of Coetzee’s texts, we see how the author of the trilogy is like the narrow-minded, self-contained protagonist he scrutinizes.

We also see, through the character of Sophie Denoël, how the literary critic potentially also shares those traits. Denoël, an academic who worked with the protagonist in the English Department at the University of Cape Town, claims that her pronouncement that Coetzee’s prose is “[I]oo lacking in passion” is her conclusion “speaking objectively, as a critic” (242; italics in original). The irony is palpable: she dispassionately denounces dispassionate prose. Notably, Denoël is reluctant to make any pronouncements of a more subjective nature: “As to what imprint I may have left on him,” she says in response to one of the interviewer’s questions, “I am not in a position to judge” (241). Otherwise, she answers the interviewer’s questions with questions and states she will not say more “before you tell me what kind of book it is” (225). A fellow critical reader, she is eager to see herself in relation to the whole, even as she is self-professedly “not in a position to judge.” In other words, Denoël pronounces—as do I—the limitations of John Coetzee and J.M. Coetzee’s prose only by echoing the parochial stance of the critical cosmopolitan subject

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35 Alberto Manguel asserts in his review of *Stranger Shores: Essays 1986-1999* that “while Coetzee the writer is deeply moving and compelling…Coetzee the reader is stern and professorial, allowing no nonsense” (46). Otherwise, recent reviews of Coetzee tend to praise the power of his prose.
who seeks to be “objective.” Coetzee’s work shows the dynamic by which such a “critique of critique” in pursuit of an ideal feeling only deepens isolation. At the same time, by demonstrating how such isolation can be understood as nonsubjective and relational, Coetzee gestures towards the futility of attempting to critically disavow the critical impulse. Just as the objectivity of John Coetzee is thrown into question through the testimony of Julia and Adriana, so the critical reader’s objectivity is thrown into question by the text’s suggestion that the critical reader shares the limitations of its protagonist and author.

Through both its representation of John Coetzee and through its own self-reflexivity, J.M. Coetzee’s trilogy enacts how a theory of rational emotionalism might produce not critical insights that abet the cosmopolitan project, but compulsory feelings of isolation. If critical cosmopolitan theory imagines an ideally rational cosmopolitan subject and an ideally passive object of cosmopolitan sympathy, Coetzee’s *autre*biography points towards how one might describe critical cosmopolitan practice when those ideals fall short. Within a critical cosmopolitanism in which the cosmopolitan subject is imperfectly reasonable and the object of that subject’s sympathy not necessarily quiescent, the cosmopolitan character of sympathy is thrown into question. Critical cosmopolitanism becomes a practice in which sympathetic engagement with others seeks to pre-empt the critique of the other. In the remainder of the chapter, I synthesize my discussion so far—and draw briefly on a few texts from Coetzee’s wider oeuvre—in order to argue that the critical cosmopolitan doctrine of relentless self-critique constitutes a practice that in actuality impedes equitable engagement with otherness by engendering both paranoia and the disavowal of shame.

To argue that critical cosmopolitanism is a paranoid practice is to argue that a subject who necessarily fails to achieve objectivity, yet *feels* relentlessly critical, can be envisioned, not
as engaged in an ongoing “reasonable” project, but as paranoid in his attempts to be reasonable. John Coetzee and J.M. Coetzee in the *autobiographies* position the self in a way similar to its positioning within cosmopolitan theory that exalts the potential of reading for training the sympathetic imagination: as that which must be subject to ongoing discipline and judgment. Within cosmopolitan theory, the ideal critical cosmopolitan reader may yet become more cosmopolitan (that is, more “reasonable”), via the exercise of a self-critical sympathy. Coetzee’s *autobiography*, in contrast, suggests that the critical cosmopolitan reader remains inexorably provincial, insofar as the discipline of critically evaluating feeling does not inexorably lead to a greater understanding of the self or other. The critical cosmopolitan reader, Coetzee’s work implies, insists on his own reasonableness, regardless of his repeated failure to be just that—reasonable. As Coetzee suggested in *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship* (1996), paranoia can be identified and defined precisely insofar as it will never admit to being unreasonable: “[i]n paranoia, reason meets its match” (203). In this light, the critical cosmopolitan who claims that sympathy can enhance rational discourse, while denouncing rationalism itself, is like the critical reader. As John Farrell argues, the critical reader tends to proffer ongoing calls for self-consciousness that are yet unselfconsciously paranoid (9). What is more, insofar as paranoia is the *modus operandi* of state surveillance, the paranoia of critical cosmopolitanism in turn suggests a subject who is not only not countering prevalent rationalist attitudes, but also one who is engaged in a way of thinking and feeling that is antithetical to cosmopolitan goals.

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To clarify, whereas critical cosmopolitan theory offers itself up as a salutary alternative to habitual suspicion despite its adherence to the cognitive model of feeling, Coetzee interrogates how the habit of attempting to feel according to a cognitive model reflects and reinforces broader cultures of suspicion. While the discomfiting interpersonal effects of “coldness” are represented in and by the fictionalized memoir, the broader politics of paranoia is addressed elsewhere in Coetzee’s work. In Giving Offense, for example, Coetzee suggests that “[i]n the excessive insistency of its phrasing, its vehemence, its demand for sensitivity to minutiae of style, its overreading and overwriting,” he detects in his own prose “the very pathology I discuss,” namely, the paranoia of apartheid South Africa:\footnote{37} “[T]his very writing may be a specimen of the kind of paranoid discourse it seeks to describe” (37). In suggesting that his own writing reflexively mimics the paranoia of the state, Coetzee iterates a “paranoid dynamic”: “Paranoia gives rise to paranoia” (198).\footnote{38} In this instance, Coetzee describes a dynamic that he initially explores in his first novel, Dusklands (1974): specifically “the power of the state to drive its citizens into paranoia” (115).\footnote{39} In a late work like Diary of a Bad Year, Coetzee suggests that paranoia can also flow in the opposite direction, via the catalyst of a literary education: this text entertains the possibility that, in the words of its protagonist JC, the “paranoid interpretation” characteristic of contemporary American suspicion of Islam derives from “literature classes in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s,” where students were “taught that in criticism suspiciousness is the chief

\footnote{37} As Coetzee reads writers who have lived under similarly repressive regimes, including the Cuban novelist Reinaldo Arenas, the Greek writer George Mangakis and the Yugoslavian novelist Danilo Kis [sic], “the paranoia is there, on the inside, in their language, in their thinking…an invasion of the very style of self” (36).

\footnote{38} Coetzee’s foregrounding of his complicity in a paranoid culture is characteristic. As Clive Barnett, among others, notes, “throughout Coetzee’s fictional and critical writing, it is the working through of uncomfortable complicities that is the guiding impulse” (155).

\footnote{39} The first part of Dusklands, “The Vietnam Project,” charts the paranoid degeneration of Eugene Dawn, a man employed as a researcher by the United States government to analyze military “propaganda services” and “offer” proposals that might have “strategic fallout” during the Vietnam War (4). The state indeed drives Coetzee’s first protagonist “into paranoia.”
virtue” (33). In both cases, to use the words of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “paranoia is nothing if not teachable” (Sedgwick 136). Insofar as critical cosmopolitanism constitutes an ongoing pedagogical project that questions, via the act of sympathy, assumptions about what is “reasonable” or not, it is training in just such teachable paranoia. Critical cosmopolitanism imagines that the patient cultivation of sympathy will contribute to a cosmopolitan politics defined by equity and mutuality. The cognitive model of sympathy that critical cosmopolitanism imparts, however, arguably promotes a paranoid habit of feeling that characterizes nationalist politics defined by inequity and violence.

Attentiveness to the cognitive-evaluative model of sympathy that underpins critical cosmopolitanism enables a better understanding of the limitations of the critical cosmopolitan imaginary. So far, I have argued that critical cosmopolitanism is a paranoid practice by analyzing how Coetzee imagines the cosmopolitan subject. Coetzee’s *autobiography*, however, also suggests a critique of critical cosmopolitanism that takes as its focus the object of cosmopolitan sympathy. Within critical cosmopolitan theory, evaluating one’s feelings for the object of sympathy contributes to the project of understanding the self’s relation to society, and for this reason, the other is always already understood as acquiescent to cosmopolitan practice. Coetzee’s memoirs demonstrate, however, how the “other”—be it the seemingly less “objective” woman or the seemingly passive text—can judge and challenge the rationality of the critical cosmopolitan project by highlighting its provinciality (or, indeed, its paranoia). The object of cosmopolitan sympathy, that is, *contra* the cognitivist model, may in fact return the critical cosmopolitan’s scrutiny, and, in so doing, not submit to the critical cosmopolitan subject’s sympathy, but rather condemn that sympathy as narrow-minded, foolish, harmful, or even needless.

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40 Reading in *Diary of a Bad Year* is discussed at length in Chapter 5.
As the judgments of Julia and Adriana on John Coetzee illustrate, the object of cosmopolitan sympathy is not necessarily passively acquiescent within the critical cosmopolitan project, but rather capable of returning the critical gaze. In other words, the object of critical cosmopolitan sympathy may, in turn, objectify the critical cosmopolitan subject. Such objectification by the “other” is unacknowledged within critical cosmopolitan theory—which always already pre-empts judgment by rendering itself an object of ongoing judgment—but, as Coetzee’s writing suggests, such objectification may nonetheless be viscerally felt by the cosmopolitan subject. The experience of “being an object” is, as Jean-Paul Sartre describes it, the experience of “pure shame” (Being and Nothingness 288-89). “Pure shame” is rife in Coetzee’s texts. On the one hand, the life of John Coetzee is riven with “an acute sense of shame” (141), which rises to the fore every time another reveals the folly of his assumptions about them. On the other hand, shame arguably marks the very form of the books: the autrebiography can be read as “so suffused with shame that the autobiographical ‘I’ is transposed to the third person, apparently to make shame writable” (Bewes 2). Timothy Bewes, following Silvan Tomkins and Simone de Beauvoir, asserts that shame “results from an experience of incommensurability between the I as experienced by the self and the self as it appears to and is reflected in the eyes of the other” (Bewes 24). Given this understanding of the feeling, the shame of the critical cosmopolitans John Coetzee and J.M. Coetzee—which may come to be shared by the critical cosmopolitan reader—arguably stems from the experience of seeing how one’s sympathy is not fostering the equity and mutuality for which one hopes. Critical distanciation that reifies the self is both the condition for, and the defense against, the self-dissolution of shame.

It follows that the critical co-optation of feelings that delineates sympathy and constitutes the distinctive crux of critical cosmopolitanism emerges as an imperfect mechanism for pursuing
cosmopolitan ends. So long as the critical cosmopolitan subject judges his feelings against a cosmopolitan standard of equality and mutuality, he assumes the capacity to make such judgments. If the critical cosmopolitan subject objectifies his feelings as an object of thought, he does not, to use the words of Bewes in describing the feeling of “aloofness,” accept that this “object-state” is in any way “the definition or the limit of the self” (32). On the contrary, the “self” becomes potentially limitless in its capacity to continually scrutinize its own limited realization of cosmopolitan ideals. This self-scrutiny, however, supplants the scrutiny of the “other”: as Tomkins phrases it, the paranoid impulse to ongoing critique operates as a “shield…against humiliation” (Tomkins qtd. in Sedgwick 136). Indeed, the ongoing work of critical cosmopolitanism seeks to forestall shame by shoring up the critical credentials of the self. However, insofar as the disavowal of one’s dependence on, and indeed, constitution by, the other is unsustainable, critical cosmopolitanism is a project that seeks to constantly ward off (and inevitably fails to ward off) the threat of shame. By disavowing this shame, the reasonableness of the critical cosmopolitan project resists being called into question, even though critical cosmopolitanism prides itself on questioning assumptions that undergird a given sense of what is “reasonable.”

Critical cosmopolitanism imagines the formation of cosmopolitan community through the cultivation of sympathy that enhances mutual understanding. I have argued, however, that the cognitivist model of sympathy upon which critical cosmopolitanism relies in fact generates feelings of estrangement and paranoia that obscure mutuality and disavow shame. Perhaps what is needed, then, in order to imagine efficacious cosmopolitan community, is a model of sympathy that is premised on passionate attachment. In the next chapter, I examine the theory and practice of such an “affective cosmopolitanism.”
Chapter 3

Elizabeth Costello and the Limits of Sympathy in Affective Cosmopolitanism

I have defined affective cosmopolitanism as cosmopolitanism that locates, in a purportedly “human” capacity to sympathize with others, a nascent or extant cosmopolitan community: one that enables us to envision an international political field that is more inclusionary and equitable than that imagined within existing international institutions. Such institutions arguably tend to rely on Enlightenment universalisms, including an abstract conception of “human” community. Affective cosmopolitanism, in contrast, purportedly registers the ways in which human beings are substantively engaged in conversation with distant others, so transnational politics can be seen to be comprised of diverse, and often conflicting forces. Unlike critical cosmopolitanism, affective cosmopolitanism is not so concerned with how humans ought to feel, given the existence of global interdependence, as with how humans do feel, given the existence of global interdependence.

Sympathy in this light is already a manifestation of cosmopolitan practice: it is an end in itself that marks how the affective cosmopolitan is able to relate to others in ways that both exceed the category of “fellow-citizens” and comprehend the existence of significant differences. If critical cosmopolitanism depends upon a capacity for a “rational” sympathy for humanity that must be nurtured through a patient pedagogy, affective cosmopolitanism depends upon a human capacity for uncritical fellow-feeling that foregoes abstraction. Insofar as reading potentially exercises a “human” capacity for sympathy, it has been suggested, most notably by K. Anthony Appiah, that a literary education constitutes an opportunity to engage in cosmopolitan
conversations. At the same time, critics such as Chris Bongie and Bruce Robbins have challenged Appiah’s contention that such cultural exchange in actuality constitutes a substantively cosmopolitan politics. More generally, critiques of affective cosmopolitanism similarly question if, and how, the international sympathies identified within affective cosmopolitan theory are distinctly cosmopolitan in character.

In this chapter, I engage with the debate as to whether extant global sympathies can, or should, be considered particularly cosmopolitan by questioning the assumptions that underlie the model of sympathy deployed within affective cosmopolitan theory. I argue that affective cosmopolitanism upholds a “relational” model of sympathy, in which feeling outstrips rational control and in which the self is given over to the other. As it is imagined in the work of Adam Smith, who once again provides the starting point for my discussion of sympathy, this “exquisite” or “humane” sympathy is conceived as the purview of the feminized subject, who exceeds the rational self through an immediate and embodied feeling for an other. I argue that contemporary affective cosmopolitan theory resonates with Smith’s theory in two ways that run counter to the central cosmopolitan goals of asserting human equity and mutuality.

First, I argue that, although affective cosmopolitan theory proclaims that sympathy is a “human” attribute, the theory itself, like Smith’s, consistently tends to locate uncritical or affective “humane” feeling in those feminized and racialized “others” historically marginalized as “irrational.” Affective cosmopolitan theory in this way perpetuates a problematic binary that relegates feeling and the body to culturally subjugated “others.” Second, I suggest that although the feminized cosmopolitan subject may be humane, she is only tenuously human. More specifically, affective cosmopolitan theory proceeds either to domesticate and homogenize the seemingly unruly, or “irrational” feeling of “others” as essentially humane—that is, as essentially
tolerant of others and otherness—or to marginalize that feeling as potentially dangerous because of its “irrational” and nonsubjective qualities. As in the case of critical cosmopolitanism, affective cosmopolitanism reifies sympathetic feeling as a distinctively cosmopolitan openness to others and, in the process, enacts the unequal distribution of rational powers.

I turn to the work of J.M. Coetzee because, once again, the author’s writing challenges just such an idealization of sympathetic feeling. By reading three works of Coetzee’s that are united by the character Elizabeth Costello—The Lives of Animals, Elizabeth Costello, and Slow Man41—I argue that Coetzee represents and enacts how feminized “irrational” feeling is not restricted to cultural “others.” At the same time, his texts suggest how the exercise of relational cosmopolitan sympathy is not necessarily one that enacts a perfectly cosmopolitan openness to difference.

1. Affective Cosmopolitanism and Sympathy

In The Theory of Moral Sentiments, Adam Smith identifies in his discussion of “humanity” a mode of sympathy that does not depend upon a critical habit of distanciation. “Humanity,” writes Smith, “is the virtue of a woman” (188). It “consists merely in the exquisite fellow-feeling which the spectator entertains with the sentiments of the persons principally concerned, so as to grieve for their sufferings, to resent their injuries, and to rejoice in their good fortune” (188). In an act of humanity, individuals “feel more exquisitely what concerns that other person than what concerns themselves” (189). While suffused with the “tenderness” of the “fair sex,” “humanity”

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41 The Lives of Animals was originally delivered by Coetzee as the Tanner Lectures at Princeton University in 1997-98 and is republished, in slightly different form, as Lesson 3 and Lesson 4 in Elizabeth Costello. Earlier versions of Lesson 1, Lesson 2, Lesson 5, Lesson 6, and “Letter of Elizabeth, Lady Chandos” (a postscript) appeared in other publications. (See the copyright page of Elizabeth Costello for a full listing.) Coetzee delivered other lectures or readings as Costello throughout the mid-nineties (Walton 282). The first appearance of Costello in Coetzee’s fiction occurred in 1996 in a talk entitled “What is Realism?” (an early version of Lesson 1), which was delivered as the Ben Belitt Lecture at Bennington College in Vermont (Graham, “Textual” 220).
lacks the real “generosity” that comes when, through “an effort of magnanimity,” individuals “act according to those views of things which they feel must naturally occur to any third person” (188-89). Humanity, in other words, is feeling that is not tempered by the “reasonable” awareness of “the real littleness of ourselves” (133); it is “exquisite sympathy” that lacks “self-denial” and “self-command” (188). As we have seen, Smith suggests that “[i]t is not the soft power of humanity” that is “capable of counteracting the strongest impulses of self-love,” but rather a fellow-feeling that is governed “by the eye” of an “impartial spectator,” or “the man within” (133). Smith, Laura Hinton notes, suggests “the act of sympathy is literally a male spectatorial and ethical practice” (27); to man alone is accorded “the capacity for reflection, for detachment” (27). The capacity to “merely” feel passionately is accorded to an irrational, feminized “other.” This other is self-effacing on two counts: she feels “more exquisitely what concerns the other person,” but also, by losing herself in another, she abandons the potential to exercise “self-denial” or “self-command.” Consequently, and paradoxically, she seems particularly vulnerable to acting in a way that promotes “self-love.” Because “humane actions” consist “only in doing what…exquisite sympathy would of its own accord prompt us to do,” these actions are not, argues Smith, examples of true “generosity” (188).

Smith’s distinction between “sympathy” and “exquisite sympathy” highlights how sympathy can be conceived alternately as an operation of distance and as an operation of proximity. On the one hand, theorists such as the sociologist Candace Clark define sympathy as that which flows systematically through society. As Clark argues in *Misery and Company: Sympathy in Everyday Life* (1997), we “manage” our feelings of sympathy according to “feeling rules” and are very concerned with feeling correctly (Clark 13). Within this model, which is taken up in critical cosmopolitanism, sympathy is conceived as being more symbolic than embodied
(Clark 19); it describes a cognitive process more than a visceral feeling. On the other hand, as Craig Taylor exemplifies in *Sympathy: A Philosophical Analysis* (2002), sympathy can also be imagined as a “primitive” response: as an immediate and unthinking reaction to others that cannot be explained in terms of something more “fundamental,” such as desires or motives (3). Sympathy here is conceived as primarily a product of embodiment. Affective cosmopolitanism moves away from a vision of sympathy as manageable feeling and toward this model of pre-conscious feeling that stresses the embodied experience of belonging.

By suggesting the existence of cosmopolitan sympathies that are nonconscious, affective cosmopolitan theorists adhere to a model of sympathy that attends to what Rei Terada calls “the nonsubjectivism of emotion” (7), or what Sara Ahmed calls the “relational” character of emotions (7). Within these frameworks for understanding emotion, an active subject does not

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42 The two models of sympathy described by Clark and Taylor correspond respectively with the terms “empathy” and “sympathy” as they are defined by Lauren Wispé in *The Psychology of Sympathy* (1991). “[I]n empathy,” Wispé summarizes, “one person reaches out for the other person, whereas in sympathy the sympathizer is moved by the other person” (79). If empathy is thusly defined as “a way of knowing” and sympathy defined as “a way of relating” (80), then my discussions of critical and affective cosmopolitanism might be understood as centering on empathy and sympathy, respectively. As the work of Adam Smith and Candace Clark indicates, however, the term “sympathy” might be interchangeable with “empathy”: “sympathy” can also describe an act of “reach[ing] out for the other person” and “a way of relating.”

43 Terada distinguishes between the “classical perspective” of emotion, wherein “only subjects have emotions, so emotions must be ‘cognitive’ idealities expressed by subjects” and the “poststructuralist perspective,” wherein “the presence of emotion signals that in practice, experience is difference” (46). Terada unites these perspectives by arguing that “emotion indexes strains in [classical] philosophy—the same strains that poststructuralist theory argues fracture the classical model of subjectivity” (3). Feeling, she suggests, is that in philosophy which, “[f]eared as a hazard or prized as a mysterious gift” (3), has always signaled an anxiety that subjects are not fully subjects. Indeed, argues Terada, “we would have no emotions if we were subjects” (4); feeling describes the experience of how we are not subjects. The “content approach” to emotion (Terada rejects the term “cognitive theory” because it falsely implies a reliance on cognitive psychology [18]) elides the extent to which feelings are experienced as self-difference, as that which has been represented to the self as the self (21). Feeling belies subjectivity, concludes Terada, however much philosophy has tried to contain feeling within the subject.

44 Ahmed argues that emotions are “both about objects, which they hence shape, and are also shaped by contact with objects”: “The attribution of feeling to an object (I feel afraid because you are fearsome) is an effect of the encounter, which moves the subject away from the object. Emotions involve such affective
feel for a passive object; feeling is not an expression of the subject’s cognition. Rather, emotion signals how “objects” of feeling affect the feeling subject. Feeling cosmopolitan, within affective cosmopolitanism, is a matter of being relentlessly affected by, and (re)oriented towards, distant others in ways that are not always manageable.

At first glance, some articulations of affective cosmopolitan theory contravene Smith’s relegation of pre-conscious or extra-rational feeling to the feminine subject by maintaining that such feeling is a universal human attribute. In Appiah’s understanding of cosmopolitanism, as in other models of affective cosmopolitanism, an innate, “human” tendency imaginatively to engage with, and respond to, others is an example of the “similar mental apparatus” that human beings use in their struggle “to understand the world” (“Cosmopolitan” 224). “[T]his is just how things are,” writes Appiah (224). Judith Butler and Paul Gilroy similarly suggest a universal “human” condition of ongoing, necessary mutuality. In “Violence, Mourning, Politics” (2003), Butler finds in feeling a marker of common dependence, arguing that we often find ourselves to be “beside ourselves, whether in sexual passion, or emotional grief, or political rage” (14): “[T]his disposition of ourselves outside ourselves seems to follow from bodily life, from its vulnerability and its exposure” (15). While Butler never uses the term “cosmopolitanism,” she yet identifies “a primary human vulnerability to other humans” (“Violence” 18), which experiences of violence and loss expose. Butler argues that the decision to “stay with the sense of loss” that marks our vulnerability may “return us to a sense of human vulnerability, to our collective responsibility for the physical lives of one another” (19). Butler concludes that feelings yield “resources for the rethinking of community,” particularly on a transnational scale (9). The “power and the persistence of vulnerability,” she writes, might be used to rethink “international coalition” in forms of reorientation” (7). Consequently, argues Ahmed, “attending to emotions might show us how all actions are reactions, in the sense that what we do is shaped by the contact we have with others” (4).
terms that are “modeled on new modes of cultural translation and would be different from appreciating this or that position or asking for recognition in ways that assume that we are all fixed and frozen in our various locations and ‘subject-positions’” (33-34). Gilroy in contrast, in Postcolonial Melancholia (2005), explicitly identifies as cosmopolitan his “ambitions” for an “agonistic, planetary humanism capable of comprehending the universality of our elemental vulnerability to the wrongs we visit upon each other” (4). For Appiah, Butler, and Gilroy, to feel is to be human: humanity is defined as an embodied condition in which one necessarily affects and is affected by other human beings.

These theorists discuss cosmopolitan feeling in universal terms. At the same time, however, their emphasis on biological limitations (shared “mental apparatus”) and mutual “vulnerability” suggests a re-gendering of the Enlightenment model of the rational, masculine “human” that yet shares with that model a problematic binarism that characterizes “humanity” in distinctly gendered terms. The binarism is most explicitly evident in Butler’s essay, in which she suggests that women especially are familiar with the problem of negotiating “a sudden and unprecedented vulnerability”—and, therefore, ostensibly, better positioned for “rethinking” community (“Violence” 29). The “human subject” is feminized, insofar as “vulnerability” both characterizes the feminine and stands as a “precondition for humanization” (30). The human is also feminized, however, insofar as vulnerability is associated with expression of feelings, such as grief: “What grief displays…is the thrall in which our relations with others hold us” (13). Feeling, in turn, has long been associated with femininity. As Alison M. Jaggar phrases the common point in a recently anthologized essay, “Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology” (1989), “the emotionality of women is a familiar cultural stereotype” (59). Butler works against this stereotype by reconfiguring the vulnerability and feeling traditionally associated with the
feminine as human. Appiah and Gilroy, by imagining cosmopolitanisms premised on innate feeling and vulnerability, respectively, might similarly be read as working to re-gender humanity. This re-gendering avoids delimiting cosmopolitan practice to an ideally critical, and implicitly masculine, subject. At the same time, formulations of humanity premised on a pre-given and feminized orientation towards others risk reinforcing cultural stereotypes, insofar as they set the stage for claims that cosmopolitanism may be conceived as being especially the purview of feminized subjects.

Such claims are readily found in affective cosmopolitan theory that eschews declarations of a universal humanity. Within this theory, there is an implicit trend to attribute innate, nonconscious cosmopolitan feeling chiefly to those non-male and nonwhite “others” who have historically been associated in western philosophy with unruly, irrational passions (Jaggar 59). For instance, while Robbins calls for a more “inclusionary” understanding of cosmopolitanism, premised on “actually existing” attachments, it is precisely this expansive move that allows him to highlight how “the servant, the refugee and the economic migrant” become examples of the “unwilling and ambivalent cosmopolitan” (Robbins, Feeling 3). Concomitantly, Malcomson, who embraces Robbins’ theory of actually existing cosmopolitanism in his essay “The Varieties of Cosmopolitan Experience” (1998), suggests that it is “the non-Western world, which is today the more natural forcing ground of cosmopolitanism” (261). The cosmopolitan figures representative of “actually existing cosmopolitanisms,” such as those of “migrant domestic labour,” are thus often implicitly racialized (Young 146-47).

Malcomson’s characterization of the “non-Western world” as a “forcing ground” for cosmopolitan thought is suggestive of the coerciveness of locating affective cosmopolitanism in “others.” On the one hand, Malcomson’s phrasing signals the political potential that advocates of
“actually existing cosmopolitanism” discover in identifying transnational connections that arguably resist “the idea that an economic system provides the basic measure of cultural value” (261-62). On the other hand, the phrase “forcing ground” lays bare the degree to which the designation “cosmopolitanism” is enforced upon others within affective cosmopolitan theory. Affective cosmopolitanism that eschews universals seeks to articulate versions of transnationalism that stand as alternatives to a global consumer culture—versions that are antithetical to an elite “cosmopolitan” lifestyle premised on consumption and privilege. Like more universal visions of affective cosmopolitanism, however, this theory operates through recourse to familiar binaries that associate otherness with humaneness.

Subjects within affective cosmopolitanism that privileges difference before universality are often implicitly racialized: as Gillian Young notes in “Cosmopolitanism and Feminism in the Age of the ‘War on Terror’” (2009), these subjects are also often implicitly feminized (Young 146-47).45 Tellingly, in Cosmopolitanism (2002), Breckenridge, Pollock, Bhabha, and Chakrabarty advocate a “cosmofeminism” that contains “a focus on projects of the intimate sphere conceived as a part of cosmopolitanism” (8-9). Young herself begins to enact such a cosmofeminist project when, via a reading of Virginia Woolf, she offers a model of a cosmopolitan woman who is “a socially grounded and connected individual” (149), and who stands in opposition to those “moral, political, and cultural forms of cosmopolitanism” in which “the abstract notion of the individual is usually assumed in masculine terms” (146).46 As Ania Spyra bluntly argues in “Is Cosmopolitanism Not For Women?” (2006), “the model of disembodied cosmopolitanism does

45 Chandra Talpade Mohanty also observes that “‘globalized’ representations of women” tend to reproduce problematically images of the “domestic” worker who labours in globalized markets and who is juxtaposed to the active masculine subject possessed of financial acumen who controls those markets (247).
46 Young makes central to her analysis Woolf’s statement that “a woman has no country,” which, Young argues, “remains the most famous catchphrase from Three Guineas” (149).
not work for women” (3). Spyra calls instead for a “conceptualization of cosmopolitanism” that accounts for the “specificity” of the body, and especially of the feminized body (22). Perhaps the most extreme example of the tendency to associate sympathy-as-affect and femininity in cosmopolitan theory, however, is to be found in Mica Nava’s *Visceral Cosmopolitanism* (2007): “[T]he evidence suggests,” Nava writes, “[that] visceral cosmopolitanism has been driven predominantly by women” (71). While she believes this has been “determined in part by their own sense of exclusion as women” (69), she also draws on an “eclectic” array of psychoanalytic thinkers to suggest a particularly feminine “architecture of the psyche” (74), such that “women’s subjectivity—femininity—is more likely to be about conjoining” (73). In all of these cases, the feeling, embodied cosmopolitan woman stands in opposition to the thinking, abstracting cosmopolitan male. The attribution of destabilizing (if critically fruitful) cosmopolitan feeling to subordinated groups arguably reinforces those groups’ subordination.

At the same time as affective cosmopolitan theory attributes extra-rational feeling to cultural “others,” it also moves either to domesticate that feeling as benevolently humane, or to marginalize that feeling as dangerously unreasonable. Once again, there is a tension between the broader claims of affective cosmopolitan theory and its implicit trajectory. Explicitly, affective cosmopolitan theory disavows the possibility that the cosmopolitan feeling it discusses resembles the universal goodwill towards humanity that can more easily be associated with critical cosmopolitan theory. Rather, just as Smith seems wary of an “exquisite sympathy” that has not been tempered by “reason,” there is a hint of threat surrounding accounts of affective cosmopolitan sympathies. Robbins, for example, suggests that cosmopolitanism becomes “messy” when it is understood in terms of visceral belonging (“Introduction” 5). It consists of the same “sorts of potent and dangerous solidarity” that define nationalism (Robbins, *Feeling* 7).
Ulrich Beck seconds this view of “actually existing” cosmopolitanism, suggesting that cosmopolitan empathy goes hand in hand with anger and aggression, in part as a response to a sense of disintegrating or challenged belonging and identity (8). Julia Kristeva renders the paradox in explicitly gendered terms. Women are “boundary subjects,” she suggests, whose straddling of “nation and world” risks ensnaring “us” in “one side or the other (nationalist or world-oriented militants),” even as this “crossing of boundaries” also leaves women well-positioned to, like Kristeva, “ch[oose] cosmopolitanism” (Kristeva 35; 16). Implicit in these formulations of cosmopolitan feeling is the possibility that the experience of affective, extra-rational sympathy is as liable to result in new forms of exclusion as it is to yield an enhanced sense of mutuality and equality.47

Such allusions to the potential volatility of cosmopolitan feeling are largely unelaborated within affective cosmopolitan theory. That said, these allusions contain echoes of a persistent cultural fear and derogation of feminine feeling, such as is evident in Smith’s account of an “exquisite sympathy,” in which the very openness to alterity that passion implies also suggests a loss of a civilized “self.” To apply Smith’s terms to affective cosmopolitan theory, affective sympathies that cross national boundaries emerge as dangerous forms of feeling that lack “self-command” while also potentially expressing “self-love” (188; 133).

More common than discussions of how cosmopolitan feeling may risk shoring up ostensibly irrational, parochial allegiances, however, is discussion of the ways in which affective cosmopolitan sympathies potentially constitute cosmopolitan practices that propagate, even as they evidence, broader human community. Robbins, for example, speculates as to whether some forms of cosmopolitan feeling do not “tend to soften rather than intensify the furies of ethnic

47 The possibility that visceral sympathy is the other side of the coin of “potent” aggression is discussed later in this chapter in relation to shame in Slow Man.
nationalism” (11). Butler argues that, when we allow ourselves to feel strong attachments to others, we might apprehend a “more general conception of the human…in which we are, from the start, given over to the other” (19). Nava is more insistent. Cosmopolitan “feelings of benevolence and interest,” she writes, “have often coexisted with, and operated against the grain of, dominant political and representational regimes of exclusion and racism, of ‘white paranoia’” (63-64). “Historically,” says Nava, cosmopolitan feelings “have fuelled innumerable small heroic acts” (74). The editors of *Cosmopolitanism* see similar promise in affective cosmopolitanisms. “The cosmofeminine,” they write, could “be seen as subverting those larger networks that refuse to recognize their own nature as specific systems of relations among others,” including those understandings of “cosmopolitan solidarities and networks” that position cosmopolitanism as simply “a screen for globalization or an antidote to nationalism” (8-9). The cosmopolitan relationship, in these accounts, is one that “softens” and humanizes exclusionary forms of identity: it makes the self other.

The tendency within affective cosmopolitanism to minimize the possibility that “humane” sympathy can be both “dangerous” and intolerant is perhaps most starkly apparent in Appiah’s seminal *Cosmopolitanism* (2006). Appiah insists on the beneficent effects of cosmopolitan sympathy, even in instances of radical inequality and violence. “The real challenge to cosmopolitanism isn’t the belief that other people don’t matter at all,” writes Appiah. “It’s the belief that they don’t matter very much” (153). Appiah argues that even the worst injustices are attended by rationalizations that mark a universal tendency to imaginatively sympathize with others:

Those we think of as willing to claim that not everyone matters—the Nazis, the racists, the chauvinists of one sort and another—don’t stop with saying, “Those people don’t
matter.” They tell you why. Jews are destroying our nation. Black people are inferior…It’s not that they don’t matter; it’s that they have earned our hatred or contempt. They deserve what we are doing to them. (151-52)

For Appiah, reasoning, like reading, both evidences and forwards cosmopolitan sympathy: if critical cosmopolitanism subsumes passion to a “reasonable” sympathy for humanity, Appiah here subsumes reasoning to a visceral cosmopolitan sympathy—a feeling for and vulnerability before all of humanity. “If someone really thinks that some group of people genuinely doesn’t matter at all,” writes Appiah, “he will suppose they are outside the circle of those to whom justifications are due” (153). He adds parenthetically: “That’s one reason it’s easier to think that animals don’t matter than to think that people don’t matter: animals can’t ask us why we are abusing them” (153). Appiah’s cosmopolitanism, like other theories of affective cosmopolitanism, minimizes the possibility that the reasoning of “the Nazis, the racists, the chauvinists” evidences an imaginative engagement with others as nonhuman—as abjected from the realm of conversation that Appiah argues “helps people get used to one another” and “live together in peace” (85).48 While affective cosmopolitanism eschews the cognitivism that reduces

48 A notable exception to the tendency among affective cosmopolitan theorists to avoid imagining the human in nonhuman terms is found in Judith Butler, who voices special concern for those individuals who are “inhuman, the beyond the human, the less than human” (Undoing 30). By this, Butler does not necessarily refer to those who have been called “less than human,” but rather to those who have been “called unreal” (Undoing 30). Butler identifies a range of persons who must struggle “to be conceived as persons” within American culture and elsewhere (Undoing 32; italics in original): from members of racial and sexual minorities to those people who have fallen victim to American military violence in Afghanistan (“Violence” 21). Given the silence surrounding the deaths of “queer lives that vanished on September 11,” or “the few deaths from AIDS” that were publicly grieved, or the “extensive deaths now taking place in Africa” that also go unmarked in American politics and media, Butler locates bodies that are “fundamentally unintelligible” (“Violence” 23). For Butler, the urgent problem is that there are bodies that do not matter—they “have not been admitted into the terms that govern reality” (Undoing 31). Appiah diverges from Butler, insofar as he argues that the real challenge for ethics comes after lives are made intelligible. Despite these differences as to what constitutes dehumanization, Butler and Appiah agree on the value of feeling for cultivating humanity. “Lives become legible, valuable, worthy of support,” Butler argues, as “passion, injury, grief, [and] aspiration become recognized” (Bodies 21).
humanity’s effects to the sympathetic, it is nevertheless problematic insofar as it defines humanity as quintessentially cosmopolitan in its sympathies. The affects of “others,” like the violent affects of those who “other,” are domesticated through a vision of a humanity that is fundamentally united through its capacity to feel in cosmopolitan ways.

As discussed in Chapter 1, affective cosmopolitanism follows Immanuel Kant’s “Idea for a History of Cosmopolitan Purpose” in writing a “novel” about humanity (52), wherein sociological and psychological evidence is harnessed to imagine an innate human capacity to feel for distant others. In this chapter, I have argued that within this cosmopolitan novel, the sympathetic faculty is valued for its potential to propagate feelings of humanity, even as the possibility of a human sympathy that enables intolerant or violent passions is acknowledged. In either case, however, the affective cosmopolitan account of humanity depends upon an idealized vision of sympathy that marks a de facto human community, in which members are perpetually engaged in relations of mutuality. “Humans” are imagined as comparable to those readers who, Smith suggests, give themselves over to “[t]he poets and romance writers” and display an “excess” of “extraordinary sensibility” (137). Sympathy, like reading, is not the purview of the masculine critical subject who demands ongoing judgment; rather, it is the experience of the “othered” subject who cedes critical judgment.

According to Derek Attridge, in his influential J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading: Literature in the Event (2004), Coetzee’s fiction foregrounds readers’ extra-rational relationships with others: “Coetzee’s works both stage, and are, irruptions of otherness into our familiar

49 In Chapter 1, I note that Smith prefers such “excess” of sensibility to “stoical apathy,” which is, for him, “never agreeable” (137). While Smith aims to encourage a “moderated sensibility to the misfortune of others,” he is much more tolerant of a surplus of “kind affections” than of a lack: “Even the excess of those kind affections which are most apt to offend by their excess, though it may appear blameable, never appears odious” (137). The humanity of women, we might deduce, is akin to such excess: “though we might not perfectly approve, we should not severely condemn it” (137).
worlds” (xii). Attridge highlights the ethical possibilities of reading Coetzee’s fiction inherent to what he calls the “other-directed impulses” that the works exercise (xi), such as “impulses and acts of respect, of love, of trust, of generosity” (xi). Similarly, Mike Marais, drawing on Attridge, identifies within Coetzee’s oeuvre (specifically Age of Iron, Disgrace, and Slow Man) a recurrent trope whereby subjectivity “comes into being in the self’s pre-reflective and traumatic exposure, without inhibition, to otherness” (“Coming” 275). Reading Coetzee’s texts through the Derridean account of “unconditional hospitality,” Marais argues that Coetzee’s ethical trajectory is one that moves “toward a loss, rather than a consolidation, of self,” and that applies not only to his protagonists, but also to the reader (280): the novel has the potential to “save” the reader from “her self-entrapment” (294). While Coetzee’s work has often, and indeed predominantly, been interpreted as enjoining its readers to a relation of affective sympathy, in the next section, I examine the relation between Elizabeth Costello, the fictional John Coetzee and the historical author J.M. Coetzee in order to argue that Coetzee’s work also enacts the limits of such self-denying sympathy.

2.1 Elizabeth Costello and the Affective Cosmopolitan Who Must Feel Apart

Elizabeth Costello, like the character John Coetzee in the fictionalized memoirs, shares several notable qualities with the author J.M. Coetzee, not least her status as a cosmopolitan intellectual. Whereas the fictional protagonist John Coetzee, however, is committed to the rigorous self-evaluation that is required of the critical cosmopolitan, Elizabeth Costello decries self-criticism in her impassioned defense of a sympathetic imagination that is embodied, immediate, and inclusionary. In Elizabeth Costello, especially, Costello explicates a vision of cosmopolitan sympathy that, while radical in its extension to nonhuman animals, echoes both the
humane promise and implicit threat of visceral feelings of “humanity” found within affective cosmopolitan theory. Sympathy is conceived, that is, as a quintessential orientation towards, and openness to, others: it is a form of transparency that is comparable to the seemingly full sympathy enjoyed by an author and her characters, or that might potentially bind a reader to her book. Just as the complex relation between John Coetzee and J.M. Coetzee enacts the limits of critical cosmopolitan sympathy, however, so I suggest that the equally complex relation between Elizabeth Costello and J.M. Coetzee enacts the limits of affective cosmopolitan sympathy.

On the one hand, I argue, following Lucy Graham and Laura Wright, that Coetzee’s performance of Costello challenges the status of “exquisite sympathy” as the “other” of reason—as the domain of the body, of literature, of the animal, of racialized subjects, and of women. In Coetzee’s representation of the mutuality of “author” and “character” lies the suggestion that is not just the “other” who is vulnerable to identifications of alterity, but also the one who observes and describes the sympathy of “others”; the one who writes novels about “others” may himself be conceived as “other.” On the other hand, I argue that Coetzee’s work once again articulates limits to the mutuality of cosmopolitan sympathy. I read Coetzee as describing a model of a sympathetic self that is not just open to the other, but also reified and objectified: *Slow Man* is a distinctive example of this modeling. The affective sympathy that marks selflessness and humaneness is delimited by moments of shaming the “other” as selfless and humane: these moments of shame are disavowed within an affective cosmopolitan theory premised on perpetual human openness to difference.

The protagonist of *Elizabeth Costello* offers a vision of sympathy in which attachment is emphasized more than distance, a vision that propounds a faith in the salutary operations of embodied sympathy. In the first part of two lectures recorded as Lesson 3 and Lesson 4 in
Elizabeth Costello (originally presented in slightly different form as the Tanner Lectures in 1997-98 at Princeton University and subsequently published as The Lives of Animals), Costello claims that “[s]ympathy has everything to do with the subject and little to do with the object”; it is a “faculty” in the “heart” that “allows us to share at times the being of another” (79). For Costello, “fullness, embodiedness, the sensation of being” allows for a sympathy that is opposed to “thinking, cogitation” (78). To borrow Brenda Deen Schildgen’s paraphrase, Costello suggests that it is the “human capacity to experience the lives of others” that “links all creatures” (Schildgen 333).

As numerous critics have pointed out, Costello’s defense of sympathy seems to emerge, at least in part, from her experience of, or her preoccupation with, her own aging body. “For instants at a time,” she claims, “I know what it is like to be a corpse” (Elizabeth 76-77). She bases her claims for the sympathetic imagination on the immediacy of this experience of mortality: “The knowledge we have is not abstract—‘All human beings are mortal, I am a human being, therefore I am mortal’—but embodied. For a moment we are that knowledge” (77). The “knowledge” of death is an imagined, embodied knowledge that fills Costello “with terror” but is potentially universal: it “is the kind of thought we are capable of, we human beings” (77). The complement of such knowledge is the ability to know what it is to “be full of being” (77): to be full of “joy” (78). This visceral knowledge of the “body-soul” allows us to enter into the lives of others (78).

Costello, as Schildgen argues, “undermines the priority of reason over emotion or feelings, to link all human creatures in their common natural frailty”: she describes a “cosmic dance” premised on shared mortality (Schildgen 335; 332). Insofar as Costello implies that cosmopolitan sympathy

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50 While Costello herself calls sympathy a distinctly “human capacity,” she concedes that all humans do not share in or exercise it equally: “[T]here are people who have no such capacity (when the lack is extreme, we call them psychopaths), and there are people who have the capacity but choose not to exercise it” (79).
might exist through the kind of “conversation” generated by shared embodiment, she resonates with those theorists (including Young, Breckenridge et al, Spyra, and Nava, discussed above) who highlight the body—and especially the feminine body—as the site of affective cosmopolitan community. By placing a shared corporeal vulnerability at the core of her vision of the sympathetic imagination, Costello’s lecture recalls especially the work on affective cosmopolitan community by Judith Butler and Paul Gilroy.

At the same time, the character of the cosmopolitan community in question is notably different for Costello. While Butler, say, proposes “to start, and to end, with the question of the human” (“Violence” 10), and Gilroy claims an “unabashed humanism” (xv), Costello’s vision of sympathy tests the scope of affective cosmopolitanism by pushing it beyond the human. While echoing the affective cosmopolitan emphasis on visceral attachment to others, Costello argues that this attachment extends to nonhuman animals. The failure of sympathy that constitutes the “particular horror of the camps,” Costello argues, perpetuates “[e]ach day a fresh holocaust” in the form of the slaughter of nonhuman animals “in abattoirs, in trawlers, in laboratories, all over the world” (80; 63). Human bodies, she insists, can share in nonhuman being and nonhuman suffering.

One way they do so, argues Costello, is through the reading of literature. Costello, who is famous because of a novel she wrote from the perspective of James Joyce’s Molly Bloom, supports her theory of sympathy with reference to her calling as a writer: “If I can think my way into the existence of a being who has never existed, then I can think my way into the existence of a bat or a chimpanzee or an oyster, any being with whom I share the substrate of life” (80). In her second lecture at Appleton College, Costello references two poems by Ted Hughes to argue that “we” can
embody animals—by the process called poetic invention that mingles breath and sense in a way that no one has explained and no one ever will. He [Hughes] shows us how to bring the living body into being within ourselves. When we read the jaguar poem, when we recollect it afterwards in tranquility, we are for a brief while the jaguar. He ripples within us, he takes over our body, he is us. (98)

“As for animals being too dumb and too stupid to speak for themselves,” claims Costello, in a debate subsequent to her lectures, consider the case of Albert Camus, who wrote “an impassioned attack on the guillotine” because “[t]he death cry of [a] hen imprinted itself on the boy’s [Camus’s] memory so hauntingly”: “Who is to say, then, that the hen did not speak?” (108). For Costello, we are not just constituted by our relationships with other human animals. Rather, as Donna Haraway suggests, humans are but one of the “myriad of entangled coshaping species of the earth” (Haraway 5). In other words, as Elizabeth, Lady Chandos imagines in her letter that is the postscript to *Elizabeth Costello*: “[W]e interpenetrate and are interpenetrated by fellow creatures by the thousand” (229). If affective cosmopolitanism delimits the cosmopolitan community according to affective relationships, Elizabeth Costello demands the extension of that community to include the nonhuman animal.

That said, Elizabeth Costello tends to stress, as does affective cosmopolitan theory, both the humane and, to a lesser degree, the inhumane potential of sympathy. In her discussion of the Holocaust, Costello argues that sympathy is urgently required, as the absence of sympathy produces atrocity:

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51 While I align Haraway and Costello here, Haraway herself decries Costello’s “distinction-obliterating discourse of universal suffering” and her “fierce commitment to sovereign reason” (81). I do not think that Costello necessarily argues that suffering is the same, and I read her lectures as striving to describe an extra-rational mode of relating to those suffering others.

52 “The naming of Elizabeth Chandos,” as Lucy Graham puts it, “seems to be intertextually overdetermined” (“Textual” 228).
The particular horror of the camps, the horror that convinces us that what went on there was a crime against humanity, is not that despite a humanity shared with their victims, the killers treated them like lice. That is too abstract. The horror is that the killers refused to think themselves into the place of their victims, as did everyone else. (79)

The absence of sympathy, in Costello’s formulation, constitutes the horror that is also the conviction that a “crime” was committed. Costello explicitly eschews reason—the logic of a shared humanity—as a convincing ground for moral convictions. The moral disapprobation—of a horror and a crime—comes rather from the contrast between present sympathy and its past absence. Germans are culpable, says Costello, because “[t]hey said, ‘It is they in those cars rattling past.’ They did not say, ‘How would it be if it were I in that cattle car?’” (79). While Costello differs from Appiah, say, in her suggestion that human animals have at times been treated as unsympathetically as nonhuman animals, like Appiah, she argues that our “humanity” is to be found in sympathetic engagement with others.

As in the cases of Smith’s articulation of humanity and affective cosmopolitanism’s enunciation of transcultural solidarity, however, the idea of a fundamental and humane sympathy implies the possibility, at least, of a fundamental and inhumane sympathy. In Lesson 6 of Elizabeth Costello, entitled “The Problem of Evil,” Costello lectures on her response to reading a novel “about depravity of the worst kind” (157), that is, Paul West’s The Very Rich Hours of Count von Stauffenberg, an account of would-be assassins of Hitler that includes a description of their executions that Costello finds “obscene” (158). Costello describes her reading of the work in terms concomitant with the ekstasis, the experience of being outside of oneself, through which she characterizes the sympathetic encounter: “I read the von Stauffenberg book with sympathy, not excepting (you must believe me) the execution scenes, to the point that it might as well be I as
Mr. West who hold the pen and trace the words. Word by word, step by step, heartbeat by heartbeat, I accompany him into the darkness” (174). Rather than working against the violation of others, however, Costello finds that her sympathetic reading of West’s book leaves her with a sense that “a violence was done to her” (181), even as she denounces the “arrogance” that would lead an artist to “invade the death of others” (174). Rosemary Jolly draws on the Lesson to argue that Coetzee’s own “strategic silences” suggest an awareness of how acts of sympathy can have violent effects: of how, for example, the sympathetic depiction of rape might constitute (another) violation of the victim-survivor of rape (“Writing” 108). The Lesson also suggests that, insofar as the sympathetic reader joins the author in the writing of the text, she may be drawn into an act of violation that is simultaneously a wounding. Reading West’s book leads Costello to recall “her first brush with evil” (Elizabeth 165), a sexual assault she suffered when she was nineteen. Reading about violence breaks a “silence” around the assault that she had hoped “to preserve to the grave” (166).

Costello’s admission that “she no longer believes that storytelling is good in itself” (167), points to a familiar tension within affective cosmopolitanism: that co-existing with the hope for nonviolence in the sympathetic relationship is the implication that, by virtue of being engaged in the “madness” (174) of the sympathetic encounter, we risk the loss of “humane” identity. “To save our humanity,” suggests Costello, “certain things that we may want to see (may want to see because we are human!) must remain off-stage” (169; italics in original). The human capacity for pre-reflective sympathy that marks openness to the other—which contains the potential for compassion in the older sense of “suffering together with one another” (Garber 20; italics in original)—also marks the vulnerability between self and other that enables both the experience and infliction of suffering. As Coetzee describes the relationship between “victim” and
“oppressor” in *Giving Offense*, the relationship is one of vicariousness: “the interchange between self and other is, in effect, continuous” (227-28).

Perhaps in part because Costello’s formulation of relational sympathy elevates the stakes of reading literature, the idea of an extra-rational, embodied human capacity to enter into the lives of others has appealed strongly to many of Coetzee’s readers. Concomitantly, while critics have tended to differentiate between John Coetzee and J.M. Coetzee, many attempts have been made to equate the views of Elizabeth Costello and her author, even while granting the self-evident fictional status of Costello herself. Andy Lamey, for example, suggests that Costello’s “ethics of sympathy” are Coetzee’s own (186), while Martin Woessner argues that Coetzee’s position, like Costello’s, is “an embrace of prereflective empathy” (230). David Attwell similarly suggests that Costello is a “surrogate” for Coetzee “because she does, to some degree, speak for him” (“The Life and Times” 33-34).

These readings are supported by the many points of intersection between Costello and Coetzee. Coetzee has not only read lectures by Costello when he himself was invited to lecture, but also there are numerous, well-documented biographical coincidences between author and character: Costello lives in Australia, where Coetzee moved in 2002; Costello is an award-winning writer famous for her novel about Joyce’s Molly Bloom, while Coetzee is an award-winning writer whose books include a re-imagining of a literary character—Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (*Foe*); both Coetzee and Costello are vegetarian. It is plausible to read Elizabeth Costello as a feminized proxy for the author.

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53 From the first pages of *Elizabeth Costello*, which contain a self-reflexive description of Costello in the realist mode, Coetzee, as Eckard Smuts points out, “alerts us” to Costello’s “fictional status” and “drives home the fact that Elizabeth is not of the same order of being as we are. She is not flesh and blood but something else” (67).
To do so, however, is to set the stage for a problematic reading in which Coetzee’s discussion of an “exquisite” sympathy is enabled by his adoption of a feminine voice. Michael Bell makes just such an argument, maintaining that “[o]ne can readily see why a notoriously reticent male author, often thought to be rather affectless, should construct a fiction in which views close to his own are expressed by a woman of forthright conviction and passionate intensity” (221). “No doubt,” writes Bell, “Costello is a defensive or liberating device for the writer: a way of getting certain things said for which passionate intensity is of the essence, and which Coetzee does not feel able to say in his own voice” (221). For Bell, Coetzee’s association of femininity with extra-rational feeling, via his representation of the impassioned Elizabeth Costello, is uncritical of that association. A critique of affective cosmopolitanism could be echoed at this juncture: that Coetzee perpetuates a problematic essentialist binary that relegates feminized subjects to the realm of feeling. In other words, if Costello is read as the “vacancy representing the feminine through which the male author can speak,” then as Heather Walton suggests, Elizabeth Costello can be subject to critique based on “pointing out the negative consequences of a valorization of alterity in female form” (285). By this account, Coetzee’s fiction employs “a feminine register” to discuss “those subjects which are gendered feminine in our culture; embodiment, death, the imaginary, evil, animals, literature herself” (Walton 288). The association of alterity (including the “other” of feeling) with femininity arguably constitutes “a continuation of subjection which it would be preposterous to propose as redemptive” (Boehmer, “Not Saying Sorry” 350). What is more, it suggests a co-optation and flattening of difference through the proclamation of an “other” characterized by a fundamental, uncritical openness.

Yet, insofar as Elizabeth Costello can be read as enacting the embodied sympathy Costello herself describes, the text challenges the binarism that foists pre-reflective feeling onto cultural
others. In more specific terms, Coetzee’s writing of Elizabeth Costello can be read as an act of sympathetically “becoming” another sex that in turn challenges the sexed identity of the authorial self (Graham, “Textual” 231-32). Laura Wright, for one, describes how this act of sympathetic “becoming” marked the author’s body when he delivered lectures in Costello’s voice. Against those critics who “either repeatedly posit [Costello’s] fictionality…[or] conflate author and character” (196), Wright argues for a reading of Costello as the “imagined body through which Coetzee enacts emotional speech” (199). By reading the Coetzee-Costello relationship as performative—as “a lecture in drag” (198)—Wright suggests “the gendering of [Costello’s] position is problematized” (206). “Terms like rant, sentiment, and emotion cease to find stability within a dualistic paradigm,” argues Wright; and the rant is validated as “one form of argument among various others” (206; 209).

The challenge to gendered positions and the allocation of emotion that Wright discusses with reference to the embodied performance of Costello, Lucy Graham discusses with reference to the body of the written text. Graham argues that Elizabeth Costello stages a “subversion of the omnipotence of the author” that “is not incommensurate with the notion of the writer as a scriptor who is spoken by tradition and discourse itself” (“Textual” 225). Graham cites as an example the postscript of Elizabeth Costello. This letter from Lady Chandos to Francis Bacon constitutes the “retrieval of a woman’s voice from within a modernist text,” namely Hofmannsthal’s The Lord Chandos Letter, an essay that “has been credited as precipitating literary modernism” in its staging of the “crisis of language” (226). “In his scripting of Elizabeth Chandos’s letter,” argues Graham, “Coetzee is evidently reflecting on his own roots in literary modernism” (228): the letter “places Elizabeth Chandos in a position that is historically anterior to that of Coetzee” and that arguably “subtly pays homage” to “the importance of women’s voices in forging the strategies of
the avant-garde” (227-28). Lady Chandos’s frustrated efforts to express through language her “day-to-day moments of revelation” that are sited in her body are positioned as forerunners of Coetzee’s own modernist style (229). The fact that Costello’s most successful novel, “The House on Eccles Street (1969),” makes a protagonist of Joyce’s Molly Bloom, whose famous final “Yes” Joyce called both “female” and “human, all too human” (Ulysses 933; Selected Letters 278; 285), suggests that Coetzee’s concern with locating the feminine body within literary modernism extends beyond his own writing: we are invited to consider the ways in which Molly writes Joyce (Elizabeth 1). As one who becomes an other through writing, and who becomes a writer through others, Coetzee renders embodied sympathy constitutive not only of feminized “others,” but also of his own authority and of the authority of modernist literature more generally.

At the same time, however, Coetzee stages the limits of this sympathy by suggesting how the claim to embodied feeling, “human” or otherwise, is undermined by the process of its identification. Despite Coetzee’s sympathy, Coetzee’s body and his body of writing remain central to his representations of how they constitute, and are constituted by, others. “Even in the instant of posing a radical challenge to the question of authorial control,” as Carrol Clarkson asserts, “the singularity of voice is affirmed” (79). Clarkson’s primary concern is to describe the distinctive “responsiveness to countervoices” evident in Coetzee’s prose style (105); however, her analysis might usefully extend to Coetzee’s queered authorial body. As Coetzee performs, through his reading and writing, a feminized self, the writing “self” is assumed and annunciated: it is rendered an object circumscribed by its pre-reflective constitution by others. It is objectified, in other words, as a feeling subject.

This objectification for its part encapsulates how the exercise of affective sympathy may generate an experience not of ongoing mutuality, but of the disruption of mutuality that
characterizes shame. The audiences’ responses to Costello’s lectures on animals and evil, which perform her vulnerability to alterity, are embarrassed at best. Some critical responses to Coetzee’s performance of Costello have arguably been equally discomfited, as scholars have rushed to mitigate Coetzee’s vulnerability by asserting his authorial control of Costello. By performing their sympathy with otherness, both Costello and Coetzee assume the vulnerability that is, arguably, the “defining characteristic of feminine subjectivity” (Biddle 117). As such, they also come to be defined as feminine: as unruly, feeling bodies that are not just sympathetic, but also shameful for their unruliness and for their embodiedness. As Jennifer Biddle argues in her seminal essay “Shame” ([1997] 2009), “[s]exual difference is not one factor among others in shame” (117). Rather, women themselves “signify shame” insofar as they are culturally figured as, to return to Smith’s term, those who lack “self-command” (Biddle 117; Smith 188).

The shame of being “other” and “othered” is flagged within Coetzee’s prose. Elleke Boehmer persuasively asserts that, while J.M. Coetzee chooses in Elizabeth Costello “to submit to the femaleness, weakness, softness, eternal travail that…he has not only long associated with the body of woman but has also suspected of residing within himself” (“Coetzee’s Queer” 230), Coetzee’s embrace of embodied womanhood is simultaneously limited. Elizabeth Costello, argues Boehmer, is “remarkably bodiless” (230), and the author’s reluctance to describe Costello’s embodied experiences, Boehmer surmises, suggests that Coetzee “does not actually want to be…the body of a woman” (230). Boehmer reads “misogyny” and “sexism” in Coetzee’s reluctance to go through “with a full embodiment of femaleness with all its outpourings and vulnerability” (228; 230); women’s bodies, in this argument, “offend” the author (231). Their “outpourings” are, implicitly, objects of stigma and shame.
Boehmer is certainly correct in stating that Costello’s body is an object of shame in the text. I do not think, however, that Costello’s stigmatization is as unselfconscious as Boehmer suggests. Notably, Costello’s son John repeatedly describes his mother’s body in terms of disgust: her “gullet, pink and ugly” (34); her “old flesh” that “smell[s] of cold cream” (115). Through John, specifically, and through the use of the third person “she” more generally, Coetzee self-reflexively highlights the tendency to read the female body as shamefully “other.” Such emphasis does not necessarily indicate a failure to “be” the woman. Rather, Coetzee’s strangely disembodied representation of Costello—wherein, her body is represented primarily as that which is read by others—suggests an awareness that the feminine body is culturally constructed in terms of “outpourings and vulnerability” that are deemed inherently shameful. That Costello’s son is named “John” suggests that Coetzee does not exculpate himself from complicity in a culture that shames women—and in which, concomitantly, the author’s performance of his own femininity also risks being perceived as shameful.

2.ii Affective Cosmopolitanism and Shame in Slow Man

Affective cosmopolitan theory, I suggest, disavows the process of objectification inherent to the model of embodied sympathy upon which it depends, in a manner similar to that whereby critical cosmopolitanism disavows the objectification inherent to the model of cognitive sympathy upon which it depends. In both cases, cosmopolitan theory undercuts the possibility that the cultivation or proclamation of cosmopolitan sympathy can be a shame-filled exercise for the one who reads the “other” in cosmopolitan terms. Critical cosmopolitanism militates against shame by imagining that other human beings are passively complicit in the cosmopolitan project. Affective cosmopolitanism militates against shame by disregarding the shame attached to being
perceived as a feeling body. Yet, insofar as an affective cosmopolitan subject is identified by virtue of her pre-reflective or extra-rational cosmopolitan feeling, she is objectified and circumscribed as a feeling subject. The exercise of a sympathetic capacity to be taken out of oneself is the same exercise that produces the “torment of self-consciousness” that characterizes the shame of exhibiting a “loss” of self-control (Tomkins 136). Just as the rationality of the critical cosmopolitan is never as complete as a model of cognitive sympathy would have it be, so the visceral immediacy of the affective cosmopolitan is never as complete as implied within a model of nonsubjective sympathy.

The way in which shame qualifies “exquisite sympathy” for the other is poignantly portrayed in Slow Man. In this novel, as in Elizabeth Costello, Coetzee suggests the limitations of writers’ authority, as Elizabeth Costello struggles to write the narrative of a man, Paul Rayment, whose leg is amputated after a bicycle accident. While Rayment thinks of himself as “not a man of passion” (Slow 45) and “cold” (161), as he adjusts to a different, disabled body, he finds himself increasingly “labile” (210). Specifically, he begins to feel for his married nurse, Marijana Jokić, and her son Drago and his sisters.

For some critics, these feelings mark Rayment’s transcendence of self and entrance into an expanded community. Marais argues, for example, that Coetzee’s text suggests that “given the self’s imprisonment by its subjectivity, the enabling condition for change is ek-stasis,” or self-transcendence (“Coming” 279-80). “Paul Rayment,” concludes Marais, “saves himself by becoming other than himself” in his sacrificial love for Marijana (279). Clarkson similarly proposes that Rayment’s feelings mark moments of self-transcendence, and that Slow Man confirms the potential of bodily vulnerability to generate an “empathic response” across time and space (193). Clarkson’s reading echoes Rayment’s feeling that, as he, the “boy from Lourdes,”
gazes upon one of the nineteenth-century photographs he collects of “life in the early mining camps of Victoria and New South Wales” (Slow 48) with Drago, “son of Dubrovnik,” the picture has “the power to draw them together” (177). Clarkson argues that the “‘we’ that is perhaps possible” in Coetzee’s work “begins to emerge as a transcendent position of intersubjectivity” (180). I suggest, in contrast, that the loss of self in Slow Man is never fully achieved. Rather, self-transcendence and communion with others proves determinedly elusive, because humane feeling consistently emerges as that which is seen as shameful.

It is by virtue of Rayment’s increased sense of vulnerability that he comes to feel not just more open to others, but also shame and a subsequent desire to minimize this vulnerability. For example, after a fall in the shower that leaves him unable to escape until well after the hot water has run out he calls Marijana (Slow 208): “All shame is gone by now. He crawls across the floor to the telephone, calls Marijana’s number” (207). In this instance of being “beyond shame,” Rayment experiences a heightened sense of his own vulnerability and orientation towards others: an urgent, embodied feeling such as that which is associated with “humane” sympathy throughout affective cosmopolitan theory. When Marijana arrives, he lets loose a “torrent of words” expressing his emotion (210):

I may be labile, but being labile is not an aberration. We should all be more labile, all of us. That is my new, revised opinion. We should shake ourselves up more often. We should also brace ourselves and take a look in the mirror, even if we dislike what we will see there. I am not referring to the ravages of time. I am referring to the creature trapped behind the glass whose stare we are normally so careful to avoid. (210)
It is this “creature,” this “stranger who says ‘I,’” to whom Rayment attributes his words. His address is from an othered self. In response to this display of vulnerability, however, Marijana is embarrassed, then angry. Rayment is left “[d]istressed, remorseful, aching, uncomfortable” (214). The next morning, the pattern of sympathy and shame repeats. Drago comes upon Rayment, “a helpless old man in ruinous pyjamas trailing an obscene pink stump behind him from which the sodden bandages are slipping” (214). Rayment is once again too vulnerable to be embarrassed: “If he were not so cold he would blush” (214). Drago, however, “helps him out” (214). Rayment’s words are brief—“Thank you, son, good of you” (215), but “his heart is full” and he “has a passage of crying,” which “he hides behind his hands because it embarrasses both of them” (215). The apprehension of one’s own vulnerability as a relinquishment of self is quickly followed by the self-consciousness that accompanies the shame of being seen as selfless by virtue of one’s feeling—of being seen as more humane than human.

Indeed, Rayment’s experiences of sympathetic connection inevitably engender opportunities for shame—for the experience of how he remains estranged from, and judged by, those for whom he feels, or imagines he feels, so much. In the case of his gazing at the photograph, for example, while Rayment feels “close to tears” as he speaks to Drago of “our” history as residents of Australia (177), Drago ends the episode asking whether Rayment has a computer. When it emerges later that Drago has replaced some of the original photographs in Rayment’s collection with digitally altered forgeries, Rayment feels intensely isolated by

54 As Ratcliffe suggests, a de-authorized account of sympathy might be conceived as the relationship between one creature and another, where a creature is understood as that “which is produced by, or owes its being solely to, another thing” (“Creature” qtd. in Ratcliffe 54). Sympathy for creatures, suggests Ratcliffe, may exist only insofar as we “reflect their lack of understanding of other creatures’ minds” (Ratcliffe 58). That is, when the self is made other, all are made strange. Neither the “self” nor the “other” is transparent, and the exercise of sympathy is refrigured as the incomplete apprehension of (self) difference—which is to say, as an experience concomitant with shame.

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Costello’s suggestion that there was “no affection” behind the prank: “No affection. Is it as plain as that, plain for all to see? It is as though the heart in his breast has suddenly grown too tired to beat. Tears come to his eyes again, but with no force behind them, just watery exudation” (220). The agony of Rayment’s self-consciousness—that his sympathies have not been reciprocated by Drago—is enabled by his uncontrollable affection for Drago. The self-consciousness, in turn, yields a sharp attempt at self-differentiation: “What else of mine have they stolen, these Croatian gypsies?” (220).

Rayment’s indignation proves itself to be closely bound to his identification with Drago, and it is as much a source of shaming and shame as his earlier tears. In the novel’s climactic scene, Rayment resolves to confront Drago and Marijana, “these Croatian gypsies” (220), about the forgeries. The trip to the Jokićs, claims Costello, will “take you out of yourself” (241), and Rayment is, indeed, taken outside of his “self-righteousness,” as Costello puts it (258), when the family presents him with a gift of a recumbent bicycle, which Drago has built himself. Rayment’s judgment, that there was “no affection”, proves wrong, and Rayment feels “a blush creeping over him, a blush of shame, starting at his ears and creeping forward over his face. He has no wish to stop it. It is what he deserves” (254). As he later tells Costello: “I have never felt so ashamed of myself” (258). Whereas Rayment’s earlier spells of shame were agonizing in their recognition that Rayment’s feelings of dependency were not reciprocated, here the shame is more pleasurable, as Rayment realizes that his feelings of aggression have not been reciprocated, either.

Just as the shame of being incorrect about Drago’s view of the photograph engendered his “self-righteousness,” however, so the shame of being incorrect about Drago’s hostility yields to a certain shoring up of self. After he and Costello depart, Rayment is adamant in his dislike of “all fakes” and his sense of ownership over the “original” photographs (255): “What entitles Drago to
take over my photographs I still don’t see, but let it pass” (258). If Rayment is taken out of himself in his visit to the Jokićs, it is only to thereafter reassert his difference from the Jokićs. Elizabeth Costello, as the author of this cosmopolitan novel that brings together a Croatian family and a Frenchman in Australia, has created a work in which “humane” feelings—embodied, unselfconscious, immediate, and urgent feelings—are, frankly, shameful. They are shameful, what is more, because they continually prove to be more self-contained than they are imagined to be.

In the critical cosmopolitan model of sympathy, the paranoid structure of a paradoxically self-critical sympathy is that which promises a “shield…against humiliation” (Tomkins qtd. in Sedgwick 136): in exercising a sympathy that is always subject to further examination and ongoing openness to critique, the critical cosmopolitan works to pre-empt criticism and the critical gaze of the other. In the affective cosmopolitan model of sympathy, the imagined passionate structure of self-relinquishing sympathy likewise disregards the possibility and, indeed, likelihood, of shame. The other is rendered inherently open and uncritical, such that affective cosmopolitanism disavows the possibility that the other’s delineation as a feeling body will inaugurate a retreat to the self-consciousness of shame, rather than the ongoing relinquishment of self-consciousness in an act of imaginative engagement. The majority of cosmopolitan theory, whether critical or affective, imagines a sympathy that is free from the shame of having failed to comprehend the “other’s” humanity. In the next chapter, however, I examine the small body of emergent cosmopolitan theory that engages with the cosmopolitan possibilities of “human” shame.
Chapter 4
Cosmopolitanism and Shame

I have argued that cosmopolitan theory can be divided into two strains according to two different models of sympathy. On the one hand, critical cosmopolitanism depends upon a model of sympathy that imagines a self-mastering “subject” who becomes cosmopolitan through the extension of sympathy to “humanity.” The cognitive-evaluative model of sympathy inhering in critical cosmopolitanism, I suggest, is comparable to paranoia, insofar as it exhorts the cosmopolitan subject to practice a relentless self-scrutiny of the cosmopolitan character of his sympathetic feeling. On the other hand, affective cosmopolitanism invokes an intersubjective model of sympathy that eschews the self-centeredness of paranoia in favor of the passion that encompasses an experience of self-relinquishment. In this strain of cosmopolitan thought, “humanity” is cosmopolitan by virtue of its nascent capacity to affect and be affected by distant others. The affective cosmopolitan subject, who is both feminized and racialized within affective cosmopolitan theory, is one whose capacity for sympathetic exchange marks her feelings as humane.

In the cases of both critical and affective cosmopolitanism, sympathy is imagined as ideally cosmopolitan in its marking of an equal humanity. This vision of sympathy is dramatically utopian. It imagines the “other” as either embodying that humanity with which I sympathize, or as embodying the capacity to be humanly sympathetic: such views of otherness are objectifying and reductive. Pace contemporary critiques of cosmopolitan theory, the impossibility of a perfectible cosmopolitan sympathy stems not only from the arguably abstract quality of
“humanity” or the sometimes ambivalent “cosmopolitanism” of feelings of solidarity, but also from the vicissitudes of human feelings themselves.

Along these lines, I have further argued that, within critical and affective cosmopolitan theory alike, cognitive and relational models of sympathy serve to occlude how the exercise of cosmopolitan sympathy potentially engenders relationships of estrangement in which the attenuation of mutuality, as well as the desire that mutuality be fully restored, is experienced as shame. Critical cosmopolitanism, for its part, tends to render the “other” a passive object of rational feeling. This neglects how the critical cosmopolitan subject’s understanding of what is “rational” has been shaped by others in ways beyond the subject’s conscious control. The relationality of critical cosmopolitan practice is undermined by its reluctance to imagine how the sympathizing cosmopolitan subject might be judged irrational. The model of cognitive sympathy upon which critical cosmopolitanism depends precludes the shame inherent in seeing the self as an other might see it. In the case of affective cosmopolitanism, the “other” is rendered a cosmopolitan subject whose sympathies are potentially always already cosmopolitan. This both domesticates the other as cosmopolitan and elides histories in which the “other” has been and continues to be objectified as a feeling body. The relational model of sympathy upon which affective cosmopolitanism depends neglects the shame that attends emotionality. What models of cosmopolitan sympathy disavow, in other words, is that the persistent “other” always already stands as the potential mechanism for the disruption of sympathy: moments of sympathy for an other are also potentially moments of shame before, or as, an other.

To envision a cosmopolitan practice that admits the presence of shame, therefore, is to envision a cosmopolitanism that admits to the possibility of experiencing the self-as-other—of experiencing, in other words, the limitations of the knowing, feeling self. While elided in those
theories of cosmopolitanism that depend upon sympathy for describing cosmopolitan community, the articulation of the cosmopolitan subject’s limits is not entirely alien to cosmopolitan theory. Costas Douzinas, for example, in *Human Rights and Empire: The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism* (2007), draws on the work of Jacques Derrida to define “cosmopolitan ontology” as one in which I acknowledge that “the other is never fully present to me” (293). In this cosmopolitan ideal, the capacities of the sympathetic human self neither extend nor define cosmopolitan community. Rather, cosmopolitanism is a way of “being selves through otherness” (294): “What binds my world to that of others is our absolute singularity and total responsibility” (295). Cosmopolitan community here is that which, first and foremost, respects the other as constitutive of the self. As an idea(l) of community, it resonates strongly with formulations of the global proffered by other prominent poststructuralist thinkers. From Jean-Luc Nancy’s articulation of “inoperative being-in common,” in which world community is imagined via “unassimilable singularities of the local” (qtd. in Schoene 22), to Gayatri Spivak’s formulation of “planetarity,” in which alterity “contains us” as much as it “flings us away” (73), the notion of the incommensurable distance between self and other is reified. Insofar as these thinkers urge the ethical necessity of refusing “thick community” (Douzinas 295), they challenge visions of cosmopolitanism that are delimited by human sympathy, even as they suggest a cosmopolitan practice that deconstructs the “human” in its attentiveness to difference. In this chapter, I consider how shame, as an experience of self-difference, both promises to, and fails to, engender a cosmopolitan community that is continually undone by the other.

I begin with an analysis of how the performance of shame is integral to the practice of the first cosmopolitan philosopher, Diogenes of Sinope (also Sinopi). After granting that within contemporary cosmopolitan theory relatively little has been written explicitly on the subject of
cosmopolitanism and shame, I examine what has been written on the subject, along with a broader survey of contemporary theories of shame. I suggest that cosmopolitan theories (or nascent cosmopolitan theories) premised on shame can be divided into two main strains, the critical and the affective. I argue that some theories of cosmopolitan shame, like some theories of cosmopolitanism that depend upon sympathy as the mechanism for cosmopolitan practice, foreground a cognitive model of emotion, while others privilege shame as an embodied, other-oriented affect. In both cases, however, shame is idealized as that which yields an experience of the other’s singular difference. Theories of cosmopolitan shame, like theories of cosmopolitan sympathy, I propose, tend towards a utopian view of the ethical possibilities of feeling. This view, in turn, can and has been translated into a utopic view of reading as that which, to borrow Spivak’s words on the value of a literary education, offers the opportunity to be “imagined…by and in another culture” and so apprehend how one is constituted by others (52). I turn to J.M. Coetzee’s Disgrace because it explores the limited cosmopolitan potential of shame.

1. Shame and Cosmopolitanism

As stated in Chapter 1, in its Stoic iteration, cosmopolitan practice stands in tension with public sympatheia: in the philosophy of Zeno, the kosmou polites—the “citizen of the world”—is detached from the feelings of the polis (Douzinas 152). Cosmopolitanism and sympathy are opposed in the apatheia of the Stoics. Cosmopolitanism and shame, however, are closely linked in the yet earlier philosophy of Diogenes of Sinope (ca. 404-323 BCE), whose influence is evident in Zeno’s Republic.55 Diogenes is reportedly the first classical philosopher to have

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55 Zeno’s seminal work survives only in fragments quoted by other writers. These fragments, however, constitute “the first discussion of the polis in the context of cosmopolis” (Douzinas 154).
claimed “I am a citizen of the world” (Laërtius VI.63). While the cosmopolitanism of Stoicism envisioned a single humanity united by divine reason, in the case of Diogenes, the claim to be a *kosmou polites*, like the claim that “[t]he only true commonwealth was...that which is as wide as the universe” (VI. 72), was but one of many dicta that allowed him to self-identify as a “Socrates gone mad” (VI. 54). An exiled philosopher who was sometimes a slave and sometimes lived in a tub, Diogenes’s articulation of cosmopolitanism, rather than primarily being an exhortation to rational detachment, was “intended as a challenge to all forms of civility” (Pagden 4). Diogenes played the part of the fool to rail against the “madness” of Athenians (VI. 71), who, in their need for “honeyed cakes, unguents, and the like” (VI. 44), chose “to be miserable” (VI. 71). The philosopher’s habits, which reportedly included “breakfasting in the marketplace” (VI. 61), “going into dirty places” (VI. 61), and “[b]ehaving indecently in public” (VI. 69), earned him the nickname of “cynic,” which is Greek for “dog” (“Cynic”). The role was one he apparently relished: “At a feast certain people kept throwing all the bones to him as they would have done to a dog. Thereupon he played a dog’s trick and drenched them” (Laërtius VI. 46). Diogenes’s cosmopolitanism, to borrow Moses Hadas’s characterization, was “the proud assertion of a ragged exile’s consciousness of his own worth in the face of a bourgeois society which scorned him” (qtd. in Douzinas 154).

As a mad dog, so to speak, Diogenes’s relation to shame is complex. On the one hand, he can be said to belong to a long male tradition that finds “glory in shamefulness” (Connor 228). On the other hand, in his “elation in the mortification of shame,” lies the undoing of that shame (Connor 228). Diogenes made a virtue of living in disgrace—of eschewing the norms of civility.

None of Diogenes of Sinope’s writings survive. The primary source for his life and philosophy is found in Diogenes Laërtius’ *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* (ca. third century CE).

102
Condemning the “love of money” as the “mother-city of all evils” (Laërtius VI. 50), he strove for simplicity “such as nature recommends” (VI. 71): “One day, observing a child drinking out of his hands, he cast away the cup from his wallet with the words, ‘A child has beaten me in plainness of living’” (VI.37). In his embrace of this “plainness of living”—in his determination to live like a dog—Diogenes called for a radical, antinomian egalitarianism that insisted on privilege’s debt to poverty. Diogenes “told his friends that he applied to them not for alms, but for repayment of his due” (VI. 46). Diogenes’s cosmopolitanism, then, is one that prefers shame to privilege by rendering privilege shameful.

At the same time, however, shame paradoxically stands as a source of privilege for Diogenes. Disgrace, he insisted, is a sign of merit: “One day he [Diogenes] detected a youth blushing. ‘Courage,’ quoth he, ‘that is the hue of virtue’” (VI. 54). Diogenes, in other words, promoted others’ shame, as well as his own, shamelessly. He relished the role of the dog. Dogs, Jennifer Biddle argues, are “man’s best friend,” precisely because they act “so shamelessly despite knowing—performing—shame” (114): dogs are admired because they have “the capacity to display shame but not to be constrained by it” (114). In Diogenes’s case, he may have railed against Athenians, yet “[s]till he was loved by the Athenians. At all events, when a youngster broke up his tub, they gave the boy a flogging and presented Diogenes with another” (Laërtius VI.43). If aloof detachment can, at times, be read as a disavowal of shame (see Chapter 2), then shame can, at times, certainly be read as a form of pride. Pride, according to Laërtius, was one of Plato’s critiques of Diogenes:

And one day when Plato had invited to his house friends coming from Dionysius, Diogenes trampled upon his carpets and said, ‘I trample upon Plato's vainglory.’ Plato’s reply was, ‘How much pride you expose to view, Diogenes, by seeming not to be proud.’ Others tell us
that what Diogenes said was, ‘I trample upon the pride of Plato,’ who retorted, ‘Yes, Diogenes, with pride of another sort.’ (26)

There is a sense in which the paradoxical celebration of shame curtails the experience of shame itself—a sense in which Diogenes’s critique of power loses credibility as it becomes a source of power.57

The contemporary cosmopolitan theory that expounds on the cosmopolitan potential of shame risks with Diogenes’s philosophy the possibility of rendering shame a matter of pride: of rendering shame, in fact, an act of humanity that extends or evidences a more “natural” cosmopolitan community. Diogenes and Zeno proposed that the “only correct Republic is that of the cosmos” because “nomoi [law] and institutions” have failed to achieve “ideals of justice and law” (Douzinas 154-55). Contemporary cosmopolitan theory that harkens back to Cynic and Stoic thought similarly positions cosmopolitanism as a response to ongoing failures of justice. For Diogenes, the shame that comes with challenging extant laws and institutions stands as a sign of wisdom and virtue. Shame is likewise reified as a distinctly cosmopolitan feeling in contemporary theory, whether it is imagined as a feeling that potentially expands our sense of obligation to distant others in the service of a critical cosmopolitan project, or as a feeling that marks a de facto imbrication in the lives of cultural others. The cosmopolitan character of sympathy is derived from its potential to enhance mutual understanding, or to inform our understanding of mutuality. The cosmopolitan character of shame is derived from its potential to

57 Coetzee describes a similar dynamic in a chapter in Giving Offense (1996) entitled “Erasmus: Madness and Rivalry”: “[T]he very mark of the success of the paradoxical project of embracing the position of the fool…is that as, to the surprise of all, the power of the position reveals itself, the paradox dissolves and the rivalrousness of the project is revealed” (100). In Coetzee’s reading of In Praise of Folly (written 1509) Erasmus fails to write (to philosophize) outside of power or “civilization”: Erasmus’s cosmopolitanism, insofar as it comes to stand in the twentieth century as a powerful rival to nationalism and fanaticism, inexorably becomes a part of the political system that it wishes to stand outside of and critique.
signal ongoing failures of mutuality, or to inform our understanding of difference. In both cases, however, a particular feeling is reified as a cosmopolitan mode of engaging with others.

To date, the most explicit treatment of cosmopolitan shame in the contemporary field is Andrew Linklater’s article “Distant Suffering and Cosmopolitan Obligations” (2007). Insofar as Linklater’s article constructs shame as a feeling that potentially extends and deepens humans’ sense of obligation to each other, his writing resonates with theories of sympathy found within critical cosmopolitanism. While Linklater, who is Woodrow Wilson Professor of International Politics at Aberystwyth University, has published extensively on critical social theory and international relations, his essay on cosmopolitan shame evidences his recent interest in harm and harm reduction in world politics.58 Taking modern cosmopolitanisms, as I do, as being centrally organized around a “commitment to human equality,” Linklater defends “embodied cosmopolitanism,” which he defines as “a doctrine that stresses how existing forms of life can encourage the broadening of individual and social identities” (21). Though his focus on embodiment perhaps suggests a concern with affect, Linklater draws on a cognitive-evaluative view of emotion to argue that shame and guilt can be a means to achieving cosmopolitan ends. Specifically, Linklater argues for the cosmopolitan potential held within processes of “socialization,” whereby “children are exposed to shame [by their caregivers] when they infringe prohibitions against harming others” (29). Linklater claims that cosmopolitan “[g]uilt or shame because of actions that harm distant others” would simply be “an extension of moral dispositions which are common to most societies”: “[T]he moral resources which are present in conventions against harm and the attendant moral emotions make the extension of moral and political community possible” (33). Cosmopolitan practice, then, as in critical cosmopolitan views of

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sympathy, becomes a matter of diligently shaping and extending emotions to become more cosmopolitan. Shame and guilt, Linklater posits, “may provide ways of bridging the gulf between everyday moral experience within bounded communities and cosmopolitan principles which defend the equal consideration of every person’s interests” (29).

Though arguing for the potential centrality of shame and guilt to a cosmopolitan project, Linklater does not deny the centrality of sympathy to current cosmopolitan thought. Indeed, he acknowledges that cases for cosmopolitanism tend to rest “on socio-psychological commitments to empathy and sympathy” (21). At the same time, Linklater privileges the development of shame and guilt as being “critical for compliance with social conventions governing harm” (29), adding that “[i]n the history of international relations…the chief moral problem has usually been how to prevent harm rather than to promote altruism” (29). Linklater maintains that “compassionate sentiments” are “fickle” by nature and tend to have a stubbornly “restricted application,” while “[t]he harm that the affluent inflict on weaker societies—and the harm that results from inaction in the face of the permanent or ‘resident emergencies’ of starvation, illness or disease, crippling poverty and so forth—have a permanent claim on the global conscience” (32). Linklater concludes: “the extension of human solidarity depends not only on emotional identification and compassion but also on feelings of guilt or shame when harm is caused or when little is done to alleviate misery” (27). He argues, in other words, that “shame and guilt along with compassion must become ‘cosmopolitan emotions’” (27); and that shame and guilt are the more reliably teachable of those emotions.

While Linklater’s account of shame subtends a theory of critical cosmopolitan practice in which feeling is subjugated to an implicitly rational cosmopolitan project, other shame theories highlight the feeling’s potential for delimiting an extant, affective cosmopolitanism. These
theories are found within the broader field of shame studies, and particularly within those theories that think through legacies of colonial trauma and hopes for reconciliation. While these theories invoke the promises of shame within particular national contexts, they yet invoke shame as a distinctly human capacity that promises new ways of re-conceiving community, such that difference is affirmed in a vision of a common humanity.

Elspeth Probyn, for example, in her important article “Everyday Shame” (2004), eschews “those descriptions of shame” that “privilege cognition” in favour of those that use “a vocabulary of affect” to better understand “shame’s role in reworking the possibilities of the body and its habitus” (330). Shame, Probyn argues, “is an everyday fact of human bodies and life” that can sometimes lead “to reactionary acts” but also can compel “close inspection of how we live” and so become “the necessary force to catalyse an ethics of the everyday” (346). More specifically, Probyn claims that shame in Australia “provides a way of navigating the complexity of everyday life in a postcolonial milieu,” insofar as it “demonstrates both the singularity of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures and their deep interconnection” (329). The shame of the white Australian settler, as Probyn reads it, is one in which “the recognition of an Aboriginality is crucial, even as her relationship to it is profoundly implicated in her habitus”—in her daily life—in a way that is “predicated on interest” (344). By “focusing on the necessarily intertwined and intersubjective production of shame,” Probyn argues in Blush: Faces of Shame (2005), Australians can view history in “more humane” terms (114-15).

Caitlin Charos is another author who, in “States of Shame: South African Writing after Apartheid” (2009), has thought through the potential in shame for enabling reconciliation, albeit particularly in the South African context. Like Probyn, Charos argues “the fact” that shame “spreads between shamed beings says something about our common humanity” (302). Shame,
Charos suggests, is “truly human” and a way of “indicating our interest in communing with one another” (302), even while acknowledging past and present failures to do so fully. Within cosmopolitan theory, sympathy is invoked as the means for extending or evidencing an equal humanity that yet “others” the human. Probyn and Charos, although writing about particular national contexts, suggest that shame potentially extends or evidences a common humanity, and thereby mitigates against, as Charos puts it, “many of the prejudices that inform discourses of ‘othering’ throughout the globe” (302).

Cognitive and affective models of cosmopolitan shame mirror cognitive and affective models of cosmopolitan sympathy in their visions of how a feeling might constitute cosmopolitan practice. In the critical cosmopolitan theory of Linklater, shame has the potential, as Linklater phrases it (by borrowing the words of T. Erskine), for “universalizing ‘the scope of ethical concern’” (21). Shame, in this vision of cosmopolitanism, has the potential to strengthen extant international institutions that call for such a universalized ethical concern. In the (implicit) affective cosmopolitanism of Probyn and Charos, in contrast, an extant “humane” shame generates opportunities for thinking and feeling outside of habitual constraints in ways that exceed conscious control. Shame, in this account, creates concern for the other, in ways that are sudden and compulsive, even as the completeness of this concern is always already qualified by the feeling of shame itself. In both cognitive and affective accounts of cosmopolitan shame, shame is a mechanism for apprehending a “human” equality that yet acknowledges—that is indeed comprised of—singular differences.

Given this theorized potential of shame for extending or realizing humanity, the question arises as to how it might be cultivated or exercised. While Linklater refers generally to the “socialization” of children, both Probyn and Charos suggest how the study of literature might be
as pertinent to discussions of cosmopolitan shame as it is to discussions of cosmopolitan sympathy. Probyn argues that shameful stories can potentially lead us to use and relate to shame in new and productive ways (*Blush* 114-15). Charos cites specifically the “unique possibilities” in fiction “for exploring ambiguities and elusive feelings like shame” (284). Focusing on Zoë Wicomb’s *David’s Story* and Phaswane Mpe’s *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, Charos argues that “these writers…move us to consider what it might mean to live in an indefinite state of shame” (284-85). Probyn and Charos’s readings recall a larger body of recent scholarship that explores the potentially intimate connection between reading and shame, particularly in colonial and postcolonial contexts.

The connection between novel reading and shame, argues Daniel Born in *The Birth of Liberal Guilt* (1995), ripened to fruition in the Victorian period: works by Dickens, Eliot, and Conrad are distinctive, he claims, because they “show a sense of collective guilt about the very poor and the sins of empire” (16). More than inviting sympathy for another’s suffering, these novels, Born suggests, solicit shame for one’s complicity in that suffering: “Literature of liberal guilt invites…that we assess ourselves in light of the work” (165). While Born’s argument concerns literature written during the height of the British Empire, his suggestion as to the centrality of shame to reading persists in contemporary studies of postcolonial literatures. Timothy Bewes, in *The Event of Postcolonial Shame* (2011), offers the strongest articulation of

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59 The synthesis in this paragraph of work that examines the relation between shame and reading is taken in part from my chapter “Sympathetic Shame in J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* and Diary of a Bad Year,” included in *Postcolonial Audiences: Readers, Viewers and Reception* (2012).

60 I deliberately use “shame” interchangeably with “liberal guilt.” Given that guilt commonly describes “what I have done,” while shame describes “who I am” (Abdel-Nour 707), the “guilt” that Born delineates is more akin to the latter: “Liberal guilt carries distinctiveness chiefly on account of its inability to find for the problem of guilt a consolatory response” (Born 166). There is no particular act that could be performed in order to atone for particular actions. On the contrary, liberal guilt is generalized to “every level of human social institutions and relations” (Born 167). It is, in fact, shame in what the system is.
this centrality, arguing that “postcolonial literature has, since its inception, been engaged in a
thinking and materialization of the relation between shame and form” (47). Postcolonial
literature, suggests Bewes, is “writing that comes into existence always already aware of its
reflection in the eyes of the other” (42); it is writing that foregrounds both its privilege and
presumption, as well as its complicity in colonial modes of thought. Postcolonial literature,
Bewes concludes, is “particularly suited to a reading” that attends to the shame of the text—that
is, to the text’s “representational and ethical inadequacy” (47). Bewes stresses that this shame “is
not an ethics predicated upon the obligation of the ‘self’ towards the ‘other’” (29)—such an
ethics, as we have seen, is the purview of sympathy. Rather, shame, argues Bewes, drawing on
Gilles Deleuze’s reading of Primo Levi’s The Drowned and the Saved, “is an experience of the
subject’s dissolution” (28): it is a figure of “the very discontinuity of the self, its otherness to
itself” (23). “A work that affects us with shame,” by this account, is an “event” wherein “the
object of shame coincides with the experiencing subject” (22). Literary shame, Bewes argues,
foregrounds “the ethical necessity” to “think in the absence of forms,” including those of
“subject” and “object” (46). In “Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins” (1995),
Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank intimate that shame, which Bewes associates with
reading postcolonial literature, especially, might attend reading more generally: “If…the lowering
of the eyelids, the hanging of the head is the attitude of shame,” suggest Sedgwick and Frank, “it
may also be that of reading” (Sedgwick 114).

The possibility that novel-reading may cultivate shame in readers is perhaps as intuitive
as the possibility that novel-reading may cultivate sympathy in readers—and perhaps as easily
challenged. Models of reading as a means to cultivating shame, like models of reading as a means
to cultivating sympathy, raise questions about how, exactly, shame is being imagined. The shame
of Linklater’s critical cosmopolitanism arguably articulates a cosmopolitan practice that is founded on an abstract, quintessentially liberal view of humanity, whereas visions of shame as the marker of an affective cosmopolitan practice are arguably insufficient for establishing a conscientiously cosmopolitan politics. Whether shame could be both immediately felt and cosmopolitan in its affects remains an open question.

At the same time, just as in the case of cosmopolitan sympathy, there is also the question as to the constitutive limits of even a conscientious and viscerally felt cosmopolitan shame. Visions of cosmopolitan shame are arguably as utopian as visions of cosmopolitan sympathy: shame, like sympathy, is alternately imagined as a feeling that can be subordinated to a critical, cosmopolitan project and as a feeling that includes—and so domesticates and arguably subjugates—“other” humans in cosmopolitan community as feeling bodies. That said, the idealization of cosmopolitan shame is inverse to the idealization of cosmopolitan sympathy. In the latter case, sympathy is privileged as that which marks our connection with others. In the former, shame is privileged as that which marks humanity, yet indicates the significant difference of others. Either ethical relation to otherness, however, tends towards the utopian and totalizing. In formulations of cosmopolitan sympathy, “other humans” are rendered quintessentially and sympathetically “human.” In formulations of cosmopolitan shame, “other humans” represent an incommensurable difference before which the cosmopolitan subject feels the self to be an object of shame. “Other humans” are reified as quintessentially “other,” even while they are yet humanly imbricated in shame.

The utopian character of cosmopolitan shame that is at once part of a daily, lived habitus and a conscientious political project that values an equal humanity therefore stems not only from the problem of fostering, or identifying, a feeling that is cosmopolitan in scope and character, but
also from the way in which, even when such a feeling is identified, the cosmopolitan project then comes to depend upon a static conception of feeling “human.” That is to say, visions of cosmopolitan shame—whether as a teachable emotion or an extant feeling—tend to occlude the messiness of relationality through recourse to a feeling that is upheld as an ideal recognition of difference. Peter Hallward’s analysis of the tendency towards the “singular and singularizing” in postcolonial writing applies to the neat conceptions of humanity found within accounts of cosmopolitan feeling: “each [singular entity] becomes what it fundamentally is through its transcendence of relations with other sorts of social or political power” (3). Calls to recognize specific differences are, within cosmopolitan theory, contained within homogenizing accounts of difference per se, whether those accounts are premised on sympathy or shame. If J.M. Coetzee’s writing troubles idealized cosmopolitan accounts of sympathy through its insistence on how the sympathizing self is vulnerable to shame, it also, I argue, simultaneously troubles idealized cosmopolitan accounts of shame by suggesting how the shame-filled self mitigates vulnerability through the extension of sympathy.

2. Cosmopolitan Disgrace

In its representation of the globalized “new” South Africa, Coetzee’s Disgrace imagines cosmopolitan community as that which is provincial in character and centered on the daily task of living with difference. In imagining this community, as its title suggests, Coetzee’s novel is intimately involved in questions of shame. A survey of criticism on the controversial novel shows how these questions are in turn intimately linked to issues of gender. On the one hand, shame arguably enables the transformation of the white male protagonist, David Lurie, through whom the narrative is focalized. On the other hand, shame arguably describes the position of Lucy,
David’s daughter, after she is raped by three men in the text’s central chapter. To the extent that Coetzee’s novel invites the reader to share in what some critics argue are Lurie’s transformative shame and Lucy’s inexorable shame, *Disgrace* can be said to resonate with critical and affective cosmopolitan projects, respectively. As other critics have noted, however, readings that maintain the novel proceeds by enabling these shames risk affirming problematic binaries in which feeling elevates the masculine subject and subjugates the feminine. The cosmopolitan communities borne of shame, by these accounts, are ones that accommodate extant inequalities. I suggest, however, that while Coetzee’s novel acknowledges the differential gendered effects of shame, it also undermines the binary distribution of these effects by suggesting ways in which Lurie and Lucy’s shame is imperfectly embraced and imposed. The shame represented in and fostered by *Disgrace*, is, I argue, circumscribed by feelings of sympathy, such that Lurie is not self-evidently transformed and Lucy is not inexorably disgraced.

In broad terms, *Disgrace* has been read, rather reductively, as a narrative of Lurie’s declension from shamelessness to shame, and concomitantly, as a narrative of Lurie’s increasing sense of responsibility to others in a mode resonant with critical cosmopolitan practice. The first half of the novel focuses on the sexual relationship between Lurie, a professor of English literature in Cape Town, and his sexual relationship with his student, Melanie Isaacs. After Melanie registers a complaint against him, Lurie, as the student newspaper phrases it, “is slated to appear before a disciplinary board on a charge of sexual harassment” (*Disgrace* 46). The hearing shares aspects of its form with South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission—“all it can do is make recommendations” (47)—and stands as a meditation on the expectations and limits of

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61 Coincidently or not, the critics who discuss Lurie’s shame in this chapter are overwhelmingly men, while those who discuss Lucy’s shame are overwhelmingly women. The gender lines delineated by the novel carry over into the novel’s criticism.
public confession and the relation between guilt and shame. Lurie is quick to state his “position” as it relates to the rules and regulations of the school: “I am guilty” (49). His profession of guilt, however, is read as “fundamentally evasive” by at least one committee member (50). (The committee member who voices this opinion, Dr. Rasool, is a woman: Lurie notes that in “the chorus of goodwill” offered at the hearing, there is “no female voice” [52].) In professing his guilt, Lurie admits only that he has violated a regulation with which he fundamentally disagrees. He makes it very clear that his guilt stands quite apart from his feelings—that what he has done has not affected who he is. In terms of his feelings, he has no remorse: “As for the impulse [his desire for Melanie], it was far from ungovernable. I have denied similar impulses many times in the past, I am ashamed to say” (Disgrace 52). Lurie’s only profession of shame comes from having denied “similar impulses” before. Whether he is ashamed because he failed to deny those impulses in his relationship with Melanie, or because he failed to indulge past impulses, is ambiguous.

The second half of the novel focuses on Lurie’s relationship with his daughter, Lucy, whom he goes to visit in the Eastern Cape after he is “asked to resign” by the university (Disgrace 63). At first, Lurie experiences the move from Cape Town to Salem as something like a provincial outing of the urbane (ex-)professor: he thinks of Lucy as a “throwback” and a “sturdy young settler,” while he is “cityfolk” and “intellectual” (61). After three young men assault both him and his daughter—they rape Lucy and briefly set Lurie’s head on fire in the bathroom—Lurie’s aloofness yields to a general shame, and he finds his way to Melanie Isaacs’s home to express his remorse. Over an uncomfortable dinner he tells the Isaacs family: “I am being punished for what happened between myself and your daughter. I am sunk into a state of disgrace from which it will not be easy to lift myself” (172). The apology, although punctuated by a
“current of desire” for Melanie’s younger sister (173), arguably marks a newfound humility in Lurie’s evaluation of himself and others. This embrace of shame is further evidenced in the work he takes on at an Animal Welfare clinic. After the attack, Lurie begins to ensure that the corpses of the dogs that are euthanized at the clinic are treated with care: “he is prepared to take care of them once they are unable, utterly unable to take care of themselves” (146). He becomes, he claims, a “dog-man” who “saves the honour of corpses because there is no one else stupid enough to do it” (146). “After the rape,” Lurie accepts his role, as Patrick Hayes puts it, of being “a downright fool,” complete with a bandaged head, a three-legged dog, and a banjo (208).

For several critics, Lurie’s acceptance of shame inaugurates more ethical, and arguably more cosmopolitan, relations with difference. Along these lines, Mike Kissack and Michael Titlestad argue that Lurie achieves an “ethical disposition” of “secular humility” (137). Marianne DeKoven also reads Disgrace as a “narrative of personal salvation” (871). In embracing a state of shame, DeKoven argues, Lurie “connects both to a generalized regime of renunciation and at the same time to identification with subjectivities (de-sexualized, middle-aged women, black Africans, other animals) previously scorned by him and barely recognizable to him as subjectivities at all” (871). Lurie, in this reading, ends the novel resolved to “live with nothing, not nothing but, but nothing, like a dog” (DeKoven 871),62 and this ending, for DeKoven, offers the only hope for community within Coetzee’s work:

Only within this generalized regime of renunciation, for Coetzee, which…is in fact the particular renunciation of power of the sexually, politically and culturally potent, dominant white male, can the violent upheaval of hierarchies of race that constitutes the contemporary history of South Africa occur in a hopeful way: can in fact occur, by means

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62 Dekoven here paraphrases a conversation between Lucy and Lurie. See Disgrace, page 205.
of the practices of art, in fruitful conjunction with shifts in hierarchies of gender and species. (871)

DeKoven emphasizes how Coetzee’s writing operates on the level of representation to enact what Bewes calls the “mortification” or “rendering positive of the white body” (160). Coetzee’s writing, in this account, displays an “ethics of shame” insofar as it repeatedly produces “the bourgeois body as a ‘positive’ entity, thereby surrendering its privilege” (Bewes 160-61). By shaming the white bourgeois body, Coetzee challenges its cultural power and undoes extant political and cultural hierarchies.

As Bewes argues in his discussion of “two shames” in Coetzee’s work, this mortification of the body arguably extends into a mortification of the text. Bewes argues that Coetzee’s late works (Disgrace is the “hinge text” [153]) do not just represent shame, but in fact “inhabit shame” in their refusal of “the logic of transmissibility” (163). Coetzee’s fiction, like the white body in that fiction, “becomes opaque, corporeal” (163). This “interruption of transmissibility” constitutes a shame that marks “the interruption or opacity of the ethical” (163). Bewes’s reading of Coetzee’s fiction resonates here with Sam Durrant’s. Durrant, while not citing shame explicitly, draws on Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva to position Coetzee’s fiction as representing the “failure” of both the “sympathetic imagination” and “the literary endeavour itself” (120-21). For Durrant, if Lurie’s “stupefying” work (130) “in the service of dead dogs” (Coetzee 146) literalizes what Durrant calls an “unimaginative sympathy,” then Coetzee’s novel allows “we” readers to experience this same qualification, or failure of sympathy, “as fiction” (130). “This failure,” argues Durrant, “is the precondition for a new kind of ethical and literary relation, a relation grounded precisely in the acknowledgment of one’s ignorance of the other, on the recognition of the other’s fundamental alterity” (120-21). In Durrant’s argument, “Coetzee’s
fiction works to other the self, to deprive the subject of its privileges until it is reduced to an approximation of the other” (130). This humiliation describes both “Coetzee’s subjects,” as well as how his fiction operates to “bring the reader into relation with a world of bodies or bring our bodies into relation” (130-31). Taken together, these readings suggest that, in Coetzee’s work, the shame of privilege is concomitant to the shame of writing and that, in either case, shame holds the ethical promise of extending an equality that yet respects an absolute alterity. If Lurie realizes, through the shame of his body and his work with dogs, what Haraway calls an “incalculable moral response” to the other (81), Coetzee’s novel arguably enacts a similar shame.

These readings are compelling in their delineation of the potential cosmopolitan implications of reading Disgrace. Specifically, they suggest how the shame in, and of, the text might extend the scope for ethical concern by disrupting habits of thinking and feeling “self” and “other,” in a mode that is resonant with Linklater’s account of critical cosmopolitan shame. Yet the success of these readings is compromised, perhaps, if one considers the ways in which Lurie’s shame, and the text’s shaming of his body, is limited by the self-consciously critical nature of that shame and shaming. Certainly, Lurie comes to feel ashamed and his body is made “positive” in the sense that it is represented as the locus of that shame. It is not clear, however, that Lurie experiences himself as, or is represented as, shameful. The distinction is important. Lurie’s “identification” with feminized subjectivities and his “renunciation of power” (DeKoven 871), like the novel’s “surrendering” of the privilege of the white body (Bewes 161), while instances of shame, are not shameful in themselves. On the contrary, these shames become virtuous in readings that delineate their ethical possibilities. Both Lurie and Disgrace engage in an exploration of what it means to live “like a dog” that is consonant with the extreme asceticism
and cynicism espoused by Diogenes. Like Diogenes, however, both Lurie’s character and Coetzee’s text might be critiqued for their paradoxically prideful shame.

In “‘Scenes from a dry imagination’: Disgrace and Embarrassment” (2010), Myrtle Hooper articulates this case for the shamelessness of the novel strongly. Hooper, like many scholars who theorize shame, locates “ethical functions” in shame that involve “recognizing the presence and participation of the other party” (141). Yet Hooper argues that such shame is precisely what David Lurie lacks. “David elects disgrace,” she writes, “in dramatic, histrionic, hysterical ways. But he eschews embarrassment” (143). Hooper continues: “What is for the most part absent from Coetzee’s rendition of his character is awareness of himself in the eyes of others, the sense that how they see him matters” (143). Lurie requires the “sense that he is a person in a social world, with the ordinary reciprocities that this entails” (Hooper 143). In Hooper’s reading, Lurie’s shame is more concomitant with what Steve Connor, drawing on Léon Wurmser, describes as “the front or mask of shame” (228). While we often take this mask “to be shame,” it in fact protects the subject “against the annihilation of shame itself” (Connor 228). For Hooper, Lurie’s “disgrace” is a protective covering more than an ethical disposition. And, indeed, while Hayes argues that Lurie becomes “a downright fool” (208) over the course of the novel, it is perhaps more precise to claim that Lurie comes to cultivate his own image of himself as a fool by working at the clinic and taking up the banjo. That is, while Lurie experiences shame, he understands the emotion as one that is fundamentally his: it is a feeling that he currently accepts but from which he imagines he will still be able to “lift [him]self” (Disgrace 172).

The tendency towards self-containment, Hooper goes on suggest, is a trait that Lurie shares with his author. Hooper argues that if Lurie “eschews embarrassment,” he does so because “Coetzee does not enable it—even disables it—on his behalf” (143). Hooper agrees with those
readers of Coetzee (she cites David Attwell and Derek Attridge specifically) who suggest that Coetzee’s text treats Lurie with “patience, tolerance, forbearance” and encourages the reader to “read David redemptively” (131). This demand for tolerance, indeed, seems to “instantiate[e] Coetzee’s relation with his reader” (143). Hooper writes:

Coetzee’s choice of present tense suppresses, or evades, the retrospective stance that invites reflection, that engenders opportunities for regret or repentance. His choice of third-person narration abjures the use of ‘I’ that implicitly involves a ‘you,’ an addressee who can participate in a review of past actions, choices, conduct. (143)

The result of this narrative style, Hooper argues, is that “Coetzee valorizes selfhood, and extreme forms of selfhood at that” (143). Coetzee’s “challenge to his reader is to watch him [Coetzee] without being embarrassed, without embarrassing him—to indulge the fiction, to let him live his life unto himself” (143). The reader, in other words, is encouraged to withhold judgment of both Lurie and *Disgrace*: the character’s and text’s shame are to be respected as discrete.

Hooper’s implicit claim—that *Disgrace* is shameful in its shamelessness—has been echoed by other critics, especially in South Africa. In “Disgrace Effects” (2002), Peter D. McDonald outlines the controversy around the work clearly, noting how the novel’s focalization through Lurie has been read as representing, and at times as promoting, a “brutal” depiction of “white people’s perception of the post-apartheid black man” (South African Human Rights Commission qtd. in McDonald 324). While the post-apartheid governing African National Congress, argues McDonald, aimed to “use the novel as a powerful witness” to post-apartheid racism (324), other reviewers, including Aggrey Klaaste and Jakes Gerwel, were “unequivocally hostile” in their evaluation of Coetzee’s story of three black men raping a white woman (325): Coetzee, argued Gerwel, portrays the “post-colonial claims of black Africans” as “almost
barbaric” (Gerwel qtd. in McDonald 325). As in Hooper’s analysis, both the content and the style of *Disgrace* are at issue in readings that find the text “suspicious” in its treatment of race (McDonald 325):

The narrative form, a present tense version of free indirect style…puts the reader, especially (but not exclusively) the black, gay, or woman reader, in the uneasy, even provocative, position of being obliged to see the story through a disturbingly alien gaze without having any secure sense of the boundary between character and narrator.

(McDonald 326)

Viewed in the context of post-apartheid South Africa, especially, there is something “provocative,” and potentially even shameful, about a text that requires its readers to see the world through the eyes of a racist, homophobic, and womanizing white bourgeois male.

Consequent to the perceived valorization of the privileged white male, and contrary to those who find in Coetzee’s novel hope for more equitable community, *Disgrace* emerges as a distinctly anti-cosmopolitan text. Gerwel argues that the novel excludes “the possibility of civilized reconciliation” (qtd. in McDonald 325). Hooper is more scathing. Coetzee, she writes, does “not seem to me to be asking the question, ‘Can we live together?’, but rather showing us that we can’t—or that we can but at the cost of damaging accommodations, indecent compromises”—such as excusing or glossing over Lurie’s treatment of women (129). Hooper’s primary concern, in fact, is that the costs of the accommodations and compromises arguably encouraged by the novel are borne primarily by women. Readings that focus on Lurie’s supposed transformation, like Coetzee’s representation of Lurie, elide the “pervasiveness of sexual violence” in South Africa in the first decade of the 21st century” (144): “it is this context,” writes Hooper, “that makes both the disgrace and the sexual delectations of David seem like small fry”
Hooper suggests that Lurie’s “histrionic” shame, and the text’s focus on this shame, obscures, rather than enacts, an ethical program.

I think it is possible to push this point still further. More than obscuring the fact of endemic sexual violence against women, I suggest that Lurie’s feelings of shame, and the novel’s representation of this shame, in fact contribute to the subordination of women. Lurie, after all, actively limits his shame, and the text draws attention to the limits of Lurie’s shame, precisely through the shaming of women. When, for example, Lurie encounters Elaine Winter, “chair of his onetime department” (Disgrace 179), at the grocery store, he anticipates her embarrassment on his behalf. Rather than abetting her efforts to end the encounter quickly, however, he insists that she move through the check-out with her many items first, thereby ensuring that he has the opportunity to shame her: he “takes some pleasure” in noting “the little treats that a woman living alone awards herself…as well as a pack of sanitary napkins” (180). A later encounter with Melanie’s boyfriend, Ryan, also suggests that Lurie’s toleration for shame ends when the existence of the emotion implies his equality with, or his subjection to, women. Ryan’s assertion that Melanie would “spit in your eye if she sees you” disturbs Lurie as one of the “shocks of existence” (194): he responds by picking up a “streetwalker” who is “younger even than Melanie” and “drunk or perhaps on drugs” (194). Lurie’s assault of the girl reassures him that he retains power despite Melanie’s contempt: “So this is all it takes!, he thinks. How could I ever have forgotten it?” (194). Lurie tells Lucy that the university disciplinary board wants him “castrated” (66). His subsequent acceptance of shame is delimited by a similar fear that he will become, or be regarded as, womanly, which is to say, as shameful. He would prefer to be seen as one who feels virtuously ashamed.
Disgrace, as I read it, is reluctantly complicit in stopping short of representing Lurie’s body as shameful. In an oft-quoted line, Lurie ponders to what degree he can “understand” Lucy’s experience of rape: “The question is, does he have it in him to be the woman?” (160). DeKoven, for one, argues that “renunciation” of privilege does lead to “identification” with feminized subjectivities (871). However, the cosmopolitan potential of Lurie’s humiliation is limited by the fact that neither he, nor the text, can finally imagine Lurie as a woman. Certainly the white male body in Disgrace is, to some degree, stripped of its “privileges” (Durrant 130), “mortified,” and made “corporeal” (Bewes 160; 163); yet, this body retains the privileges of its masculinity. For all that Lurie plays the part of the fool, he continually acts as a man who enjoys power. Near the end of the novel, for example, he feels that “there is something unfinished in the business with Melanie” (Disgrace 190): he sneaks into the Dock Theatre to watch her act in a play and feels her to be “Mine!” (191). Two chapters later, Lurie sees Pollux “peeping at Lucy” (206)—Pollux, the “child” who raped Lucy, whom she calls “disturbed” and also “a fact of life” (208). “Swine!” Lurie cries (206), and the rhyming echo with “mine” consolidates our vision of a man who has by no means achieved “personal salvation” through disgrace, but rather continues to “fail” to see himself through the eyes of others, to see himself as the other: “He is not, it would seem, in control of himself” (209). Lurie may be injured and aging, but he is not ashamed, as, for example, Elaine Winter seems to be when she “does not look back” as she leaves the grocery store (180).

Of course, reading Disgrace as primarily concerned with David Lurie’s salvation or exculpation is but one interpretative framework, and the limitations of David Lurie’s shame point towards a second way in which shame has been read in the novel: not as the means of the white male’s salvation, but as the ongoing burden of women. Hooper does not engage with the
representation of rape and its connection to shame or embarrassment in Disgrace. Yet for readers who focus on the suffering endured by Melanie and Lucy, the potential locus of shame in the text is not Lurie but women’s bodies, and those bodies are—likewise—the locus of a cosmopolitan ethical relation to the text.

Ariella Azoulay and Lucy Graham suggest that the reader of Disgrace is called upon not to experience, like Lurie, the shame of privilege or a privileged shame, but rather to encounter the shamefulness of bodily vulnerability. “Since the stories of Melanie and Lucy are elided in Disgrace,” writes Graham, “the responsibility” for imagining the narrative “not from the viewpoint of perpetrator or voyeur, but from the position of weakness and suffering…is left with the reader” (“Reading” 444). Azoulay similarly suggests that the “[t]he heart of the novel concerns two women…both of whom have undergone traumatic sexual experience” (340), and that the central task for the reader of the novel is to connect the narratives of these women in order to face the “erasure” of Lurie’s rape of Melanie within Lurie’s narrative, where his violation of Melanie is represented as “[n]ot rape, not quite that” (Disgrace 25). Lurie, Azoulay argues, continuously fails to “see the symmetry between his attack on Melanie Isaacs and the attack on his daughter” (40), but “the novel requires readers to contemplate this obfuscation and view the failure of vision imposed upon them too as a result of it, not only as something that Coetzee is dealing with, but as an experience that Coetzee is forcing them to undergo” (40). The novel, in other words, encourages the reader to be more like Lucy, who, Azoulay argues, is able to take up “different positions in different situations” and to “wander between the points of view of all the othe[r] [characters], including…the rapists” (40). In these readings, the affective cosmopolitan promise in and of the text lies not in a spiraling cultivation of shame before others, but in the
potential of undergoing an experience of shared human vulnerability by becoming an “other” through shame: even if Lurie does not, the reader might yet be “the woman” (*Disgrace* 160).

The fact that Lucy, however, seems consistently able to see herself through the eyes of others—to feel how her position “is humiliating” while believing that “perhaps that is a good point to start from again” (*Disgrace* 205)—is also ethically fraught insofar as it suggests a cosmopolitan practice dependent upon the “humane” feelings of those who are already subjugated. After all, as Elleke Boehmer puts it, for Lucy, “any sympathy for the other must mean to live in inevitable disgrace” (349). “[A] feminizing or animalizing atonement represents a meaningful recompense for a man; for a woman, always-already a creature of dumb animality, it is a matter of no change” (350). 63 *Disgrace*, as Rosemary Jolly argues, represents a culture in which the rape of women has come to symbolize national shame. The representation of rape, therefore, raises “the spectre or the reality of re-victimizing” women who have been raped “as shamed” (*Cultured* 92). Lucy chooses not to report her rape to the authorities: her decision is arguably informed by an awareness of how a public trial might (re)stigmatize her body as shameful. To enter disgrace from a state of privilege is arguably to claim another kind of privilege. To feel with and as the subjugated is arguably to reinforce that subjugation.

*Disgrace* suggests how critical and affective cosmopolitan practices respectively premised on cultivating and embracing shame may reinforce hierarchies of privilege, rather than foster human equality. That is, shame in *Disgrace*, whether it is the shame of a masculine or feminized subject, may extend the promise of cosmopolitan feeling, but is both dubious and tenuous in its equalizing effects. This is partly because the position of cosmopolitan shame is never perfectible or perfected in the novel, and so interpretations that posit the reader as either

63 Stanton similarly draws attention to the way *Disgrace* highlights the extant global traffic in women.
sharing in the shame that constitutes Lurie’s secular salvation, or in the shame that defines women’s secular damnation, elide the ambiguities of the text to enforce their arguments.

The failure of shame to foster cosmopolitan community may also, however, be read in more positive terms. Shame does not fall short of engendering or describing cosmopolitanism simply because it is never fully adopted or universally shared—simply because it is never perfected. Rather, one might also consider the limitations of shame in the text as being in tension with affective and critical sympathy. The cosmopolitan potential of the shame of both Lurie and Lucy is attenuated not only by the differentially (en)gendered effects of shame, but also by the characters’ different sympathies: Lurie’s for his daughter, and Lucy’s for her neighbors. If Lurie proves resistant to becoming a woman, this is in part because he ineluctably feels that it is his duty to protect his daughter in a society where a single woman, as Lucy recognizes, wields little power. The reason that the attack on the farm prompts Lurie’s disgrace is that he senses that he failed in this duty: “I did nothing. I did not save you,” goes his “confession” (*Disgrace* 157). Lucy is “his people” (201; emphasis in original), and his attack on Pollux shows that this is an orientation towards another that dissipates all humility.

Lurie’s attack on Pollux also suggests the limits of Lucy’s humility, making it clear that she is not only a woman occupying the “generic pose of suffering in silence or … of gestating peacefully in her garden” (Boehmer 350). Rather, “Lucy speaks. ‘This can’t go on, David. I can cope with Petrus [her neighbor and Pollux’s relative] and his aanhangers, 64 I can cope with you, but I can’t cope with all of you together” (*Disgrace* 208). Lurie must pack his bags and leave the farm. Lucy’s disgrace, like Lurie’s, is delineated by her dedication to a particular community.

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64 Afrikaans: acolytes; adherents; backers.
although in this case not a familial one. The absoluteness of Lucy’s shame is tenuous in the face of her dedication to living in peace with her neighbors.

The shame of reading *Disgrace* is similarly tenuous. While one might join Lurie in the acknowledgment of the other’s fundamental alterity, this position of shame is mitigated by the reader’s sympathy with the weakness and suffering of “others,” including women, in the text. While one might already share, or come to share, the shame of these “others” by inhabiting or adopting their position of weakness and suffering, this shame might yet be attenuated by sympathy for Lurie’s attempts to acknowledge the other’s fundamental alterity. In either scenario, the reader imperfectly recognizes alterity and questions privilege. In reading Coetzee, shame marks the constitutive limits of the self’s capacity for sympathy, even as sympathy marks the constitutive limits of the self’s capacity for shame.

Coetzee’s work allows me to propose that neither sympathy nor shame is constitutive of, but both are imbricated in, cosmopolitan community. To suggest a cosmopolitanism that acknowledges a continual interplay of shame and sympathy requires neither the masterful self attendant to the sympathizing or shame-filled critical cosmopolitan subject, nor the unraveling of self attendant to the sympathizing or shame-filled affective cosmopolitan subject. Rather, shame and sympathy can come to describe the experience of being both at once: a self-critical subject that yet depends upon the other for its very existence. Acknowledging the mutuality of sympathy and shame allows for imagining both the self and the other as both subjects and objects. In the next chapter, I explore how, within Coetzee’s work, the figure of the visitor stands on the borderland of sympathy and shame, disclaiming the possibility of neither, and offering a productive ground for conceiving of a relentlessly imperfect, and imperfectible, cosmopolitan practice.
Chapter 5

J.M. Coetzee and the Cosmopolitan Visitor

In the course of outlining current theories of cosmopolitan sympathy and cosmopolitan shame, I have highlighted how the reading of literature has been positioned as that which potentially engenders or exhibits “human” or “humane” feeling. Within critical cosmopolitanism, reading is the purview of the critical reader, whose sympathy for, or shame before, others and the otherness of the text is subjected to the seemingly “reasonable” cosmopolitan project of furthering human equality. Within affective cosmopolitanism, reading is the purview of the passionate reader, whose sympathy or shame allegedly signals a markedly humane openness to, and vulnerability to, difference. While models of cosmopolitan reading premised on sympathy assume the transparency of others, models of cosmopolitan reading premised on shame foreground their ongoing opacity. Reading is alternately cosmopolitan in its potential to engender the experience of being, or becoming like, the other, or in its potential to engender the recognition of the other’s significant difference. My discussion has aimed to tease out the problematic idealization of both feeling and the “human” that tends to underlie these extant theories of cosmopolitan reading and, by extension, to suggest that the habits of feeling propounded by such theories may be markedly un-cosmopolitan in their effects.

I have furthermore suggested that, throughout cosmopolitan theory, whether critical or affective, the feeling individual is rendered as the individual with cosmopolitan agency—as the individual who participates in cosmopolitan politics and who embodies cosmopolitan ethics (even if there are doubts as to how substantive those politics and ethics are). Tautologically, feeling emanates from a cosmopolitan subject, who is a cosmopolitan subject by virtue of his or her
feelings of sympathy or shame. Such a conflation of feeling and subjectivity, as Rei Terada outlines in her compelling *Feeling in Theory* (2001), is circular: “The claim that emotion requires a subject—thus we can see we’re subjects, since we have emotions—creates the illusion of subjectivity rather than showing evidence of it” (11). The line of argument that harnesses emotion as evidence of subjectivity, which Terada terms the “expressive hypothesis,” pervades “current discussions of emotion” (11), including, I propose, those discussions of emotion that are explicit and implicit within cosmopolitan theory. The expressive hypothesis, Terada argues, allows us to “extrapolate a human subject…from the phenomenon of emotion” (11). By deploying feeling to characterize “the human,” cosmopolitan theory follows a long history wherein, to borrow Terada’s terms once more, “the idea of emotion has been activated to reinforce notions of subjectivity that could use the help” (14): the conflation of feeling and subjectivity is often “self-serving” (11).

The question might be asked of contemporary cosmopolitan theory: how is its articulation of the cosmopolitan subject self-serving? In defining cosmopolitan subjectivity via a rhetoric of emotion, cosmopolitan theory—and particularly that theory which makes claims for cosmopolitan reading—arguably responds to institutional pressures and expectations. Explications of cosmopolitan feeling, in containing the promise that the study of literary texts may either reveal or strengthen cosmopolitan community, offer a means by which scholars in the humanities can claim an active part in affecting or explaining world affairs. Amanda Anderson posits that the current proliferation of cosmopolitan thinking corresponds—as it has in the past—to a time “when the world has suddenly seemed to expand in unassimilable ways” (272). Cosmopolitanism, Anderson argues, is “commonly articulated in relation to new geopolitical configurations and within the context of destabilizing experiences of intercultural contact” (268). Ideas of
cosmopolitan subjectivity plausibly gain special prominence when seemingly intransigent notions of subjectivity are threatened, be it by increased intercultural contact or a growing awareness of the pervasive effects of “new geopolitical configurations” that must include systems of international capital. Consequently, cosmopolitan subjectivity here emerges as a threatened subjectivity, as a subjectivity that is always already overwhelmed.

In other words, within a context of apparent instability and limited human agency, the seemingly self-evident existence of the feeling subject is one means by which to bolster formulations of a tenuous cosmopolitan agency. Cosmopolitan subjectivity, in turn, serves to bolster (albeit tenuously) the legitimacy of those disciplines in the humanities that orient themselves in a world where the study of capital and its movements is privileged before the study of individual agency and belonging, by insisting on the relevance and perseverance of the feeling subject, however he or she might be shaped by the forces of global capital. The attendant disciplinary focus on cosmopolitanism consequently appears as something of a defense-mechanism, insofar as focus on extant or emergent cosmopolitan subjects insists on the relevance and perseverance of an agency that is premised on “human(e)” feelings that are “human(e)” only in theory.

I have argued that J.M. Coetzee’s writing qualifies precisely those accounts of cosmopolitanism that depend upon the expression or development of a particular, purportedly universal feeling. In the cases of both sympathy and shame, Coetzee’s texts trouble the idea of a perfective or essential cosmopolitan orientation towards others. In so doing, they refuse cosmopolitan practices that depend upon either the ongoing illumination of likeness through sympathy or the assiduous recognition of singular difference through shame. Within Coetzee’s work, cosmopolitanism emerges as that practice in which one way of relating to otherness is
continuously interrupted by the other, thus guaranteeing the failure of both. On the one hand, the
critical cosmopolitan sympathy of John Coetzee (of the fictionalized memoirs) and the affective
cosmopolitan sympathy of Elizabeth Costello are respectively fraught with shame and
shamefulness. In different ways, these characters desire relationships of mutuality and equality,
yet never substantiate either. On the other hand, the cultivated disgrace of David Lurie and the
intimate, embodied shame of Lucy are delimited by sympathetic bonds. Lurie feels shame and
Lucy’s body is marked as shameful. These distinct shames, however, besides arguably holding
the potential for extending cosmopolitan community, amplify extant sympathies for kin and kind
(in Lurie’s case) and for those who are not kin and kind (in Lucy’s). These characters respectively
apprehend and embody failures of mutuality and equality, and yet the recognition of difference
remains elusive. In Coetzee’s work, sympathy produces shame, even as shame reinforces
sympathy: mutuality remains as elusive as its interruption, and the project of cultivating
cosmopolitan feeling that apprehends humanity, while recognizing singular difference, is thrown
into question. This ambivalent dynamic, wherein shame constitutes sympathy and vice versa,
might also characterize how Coetzee’s later texts construct the relation between text and author,
and, indeed, between text and reader: as one in which imagining others is simultaneously an act
of sympathy and a shameful act.

In this chapter, I endeavour to move beyond the ambivalent quality of cosmopolitan feeling
represented in, and performed by, Coetzee’s writing, and to think through how these imperfectly
cosmopolitan feelings point towards an alternative understanding of cosmopolitanism that does
not depend upon cultivating or embodying a particular affective response to otherness, but rather
stands as a description of a relationship that is negotiated despite those responses.

Cosmopolitanism has, in recent theory, striven to define the cosmopolitan subject either by virtue
of the implicitly masculine subject’s feelings towards other humans or by virtue of the implicitly feminine subject’s humane feelings. Coetzee’s work, I have argued,examines the degree to which cosmopolitan feeling can be un-gendered by questioning both the extent to which a self can be said to “have” feelings and the notion that feelings can ever be selfless. The later novels imagine sympathy and shame in such a way that neither the apprehension of equality, nor the recognition of difference, is a precondition for care or a guarantee against affliction. Consequently, Coetzee engages with the question of articulating the cosmopolitan subject not by definitively prescribing or representing how cosmopolitan subjects “should” or “do” feel, but rather by investigating how the cultivation or identification of such feelings as cosmopolitan may or may not undermine the vision of cosmopolitan humanity they purportedly advance. In the coming pages, I argue that, as an alternative to the reification of cosmopolitan feeling as the defining characteristic of cosmopolitan community, Coetzee’s work suggests that the cosmopolitan subject might be delineated, not by identifying how he or she feels towards others, but rather by considering how he or she remains apart from others, despite feeling strongly towards them.

The primary figure through which Coetzee thinks the possibility of cosmopolitanism, I argue, is not the feeling subject who is clearly human but rather the acting visitor who is not. In presenting this argument, I first trace a brief genealogy of the relation between visitation and cosmopolitanism, which takes as its focus not the question of how cosmopolitans come to be, or become more, cosmopolitan, but rather the question of how cosmopolitans affect those whom they encounter by virtue of their cosmopolitanism. Ranging from the Cynics and Stoics to Immanuel Kant and Jacques Derrida, I highlight how the cosmopolitan visitor, who challenges borders and belonging, has been conceived most often as a wise and benign traveller, but also alternatively, as a threatening oppressor and a demanding other.
Coetzee’s writing, I observe, has repeatedly been read as staging lessons in a Derridean hospitality that has as its focus the issue of welcoming into the home the visitor who is, in this instance, a demanding other. These readings are complicated, I argue, when one takes into account Derrida’s argument that a cosmopolitanism of unconditional hospitality is necessarily qualified by conditional laws. They are further complicated when one considers what I argue is a key difference between Coetzee’s and Derrida’s treatment of cosmopolitanism. Whereas Derrida’s articulation of cosmopolitanism, following his readings of Levinas, is concerned with the responsibilities of the host to the guest, what I identify as Coetzee’s cosmopolitanism focuses, as does Kant’s, on the rights that the visitor demands from the host. Specifically, I argue, Coetzee’s writing foregrounds histories of colonialism in which the visitor has usurped the role of host, and thereby questions Derrida’s vision of a cosmopolitan self that is at home in the world. At the same time, Coetzee’s work exceeds the Kantian paradigm by not only questioning the rights, but also considering the responsibilities, of the cosmopolitan visitor. Accordingly, Coetzee’s work might be read, not as staging the unconditional welcome of others, but rather as performing a readiness to accept others’ conditional terms of welcome. Through a reading of *Diary of a Bad Year*, I outline how the visitor that emerges as Coetzee’s central cosmopolitan figure is one that denotes the responsible acceptance of the limits of global community, despite feelings of sympathy and shame.

1. Visitation and Cosmopolitanism: An Historical Genealogy

In taking up the question of the relation between visitation and cosmopolitanism, it is possible to conceive of the “visitor” in relatively neutral terms that are, if anything, inflected with a positive valence. Within the present-day, commonplace understanding of visiting, the “visit” is
an act in which one goes “to see (a person) in a friendly or sociable manner” (“Visit, v.” def. 8a). The visitor, concomitantly, is one who engages with others but does not necessarily affect their lives in adverse ways. Rather, one who visits goes “to (a place) for the purpose of sightseeing or pleasure, or on some special errand” (“Visit, v.” def. 10b). Drawing on these definitions, we can see how certain versions of the imagined cosmopolitan and the visitor might be thought of as being, to some degree, coterminous. Such a coincidence of terms is markedly apparent, for example, in Cynical and Stoic iterations of cosmopolitanism.

In the cases of Diogenes and Zeno, the philosophers’ standing as “citizens of the world” is generated by their status as visitors; that is, by their status as those who have seen and explored different locales. Diogenes Laërtius reports\(^65\) that Diogenes the Cynic claimed to have become wise by virtue of having been a stranger in a new land: “When some one reproached him [Diogenes the Cynic] with his exile, his reply was, ‘Nay, it was through that, you miserable fellow, that I came to be a philosopher’” (VI. 49). In “Cosmopolitanism and Imperialism” (2000), Anthony Pagden argues that the cosmopolitanism of Zeno, who was a Hellene “from Cyprus and may have been of Phoenician origin or of mixed descent and was in all probability bilingual,” no doubt similarly “derived in part from his experience of the wider world” (Pagden 4). Certainly, Zeno’s philosophy itself reinforces the Greek association between travel (\(\text{plane}\)) and wisdom (\(\text{sophia}\)) in its concern with apprehending a universal order and in its rejection of the “distinction between Greek and barbarian” (Pagden 4-5). In Hellenic cosmopolitanism, the one who embraces opportunities to inspect other people and places is the one who is bound for wisdom. Another of Laërtius’s reports of Diogenes “the dog” echoes this view: “Again, when some one reminded him that the people of Sinope had sentenced him to exile, ‘And I them,’ said he, ‘to home-staying’”

\(^{65}\) As mentioned in Chapter 4, the primary source for the life and philosophy of Diogenes the Cynic is Diogenes Laërtius’s \textit{Lives of the Eminent Philosophers} (ca. third century CE).
(VI. 49). To be condemned to “home-staying,” for the self-proclaimed “citizen of the world,” is to be condemned to an unenlightened state in which one does not apprehend a “single human community” (Pagden 5). To visit others, in contrast, engenders opportunities for forwarding cosmopolitan philosophy; such a philosophy may stand as a philosophical challenge to established forms of civility, but it is ultimately configured as salutary for human life.

To conceive of the cosmopolitan visitor in terms of the wise and beneficial traveller is one alternative for linking cosmopolitanism and visitation. It is also possible, however, to think through the relation between cosmopolitanism and visitation by considering definitions of “visit” and “visitor” that foreground the potentially destructive effects of seeking out and exploring difference. Such definitions eschew the implied neutrality or beneficence of the everyday sense of the term. Rather, in these definitions, the visit is a destructive act, in which one inflicts “hurt, harm, or punishment upon (a person),” or in which one acts “[t]o afflict or distress with sickness, poverty or the like” (“Visit, v.” def. 3a; def. 3b). To attend to these understandings of the visit is to consider the possibility that the cosmopolitan visitor may not always herald a shared human community.

Immanuel Kant’s account of cosmopolitan visitation, in “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch” (1795), attends to the potentially destructive effects of the cosmopolitan traveller. In his explanation of the “Third Definitive Article of a Perpetual Peace,” which is that “Cosmopolitan Right shall be limited to Conditions of Universal Hospitality” (105; italics in original), Kant describes a cosmopolitan visitor who is, like Diogenes and Zeno, purportedly a harbinger of “universal” wisdom and who moves “the human race nearer and nearer to a cosmopolitan constitution” (106). Kant admittedly diverges from classical thought in imagining a cosmopolitanism-to-come. In certain respects, however, his vision of cosmopolitanism resonates
with classical formulations, especially in its fundamental approbation of those who leave their homes to find that the entire world is their home. This approbation is evident insofar as Kant establishes a universal “right to the earth’s surface” (106): he proclaims that cosmopolitan “hospitality means the right of a stranger not to be treated with hostility when he arrives on someone else’s territory” (105). The cosmopolitan visitor is one who forwards a cosmopolitan world that is, in two senses, a right.

Notably, however, Kant’s cosmopolitanism also limits the wisdom and rights of the visitor. In so doing, Kant, as Pagden notes (16), challenges earlier formulations of cosmopolitan right, such as those defended by the prominent sixteenth-century Spanish political philosopher Francisco de Vitoria. Vitoria’s tract, “On the American Indians” (1539), upholds the Spanish invasion of the Americas by claiming that “the Spaniards have the right to travel and dwell in those countries, so long as they do no harm to the barbarians, and cannot be prevented by them from doing so” (278; italics in original). For Vitoria, the cosmopolitan traveller is, at least theoretically, an innocuous figure: “Since these travels of the Spaniards are (as we may for the moment assume) neither harmful nor detrimental to the barbarians, they are lawful” (278). Kant, in contrast, firmly rejects the possibility that the cosmopolitan visitor is a de facto nonthreatening presence. Indeed, he expresses horror at the “appallingly great” injustice that “the civilised states of our continent…display in visiting [Besuche] foreign countries and peoples (which in their case is the same as conquering [Erobern] them)” (106). In these visits, “the native inhabitants,” rather than being counted as members of a common humanity, were “counted as nothing” (106).

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66 Vitoria’s parentheses gesture towards the possibility that Spanish incursions have not, in fact, been entirely harmless. His proclamation of a broadly defined “right” to visitation nonetheless lays the groundwork for imperial atrocity: “Should the barbarians attempt to deny the Spaniards in these matters,” Vitoria argues, “the Spaniards ought first to remove any cause of provocation by reasoning and persuasion,” or failing that, “do everything needful for their own safety,” up to and including “conquering their communities and subjecting them” (281-83).
Because Kant is keenly aware of the “whole litany of evils which can afflict the human race” when unwanted visitors arrive as explorers (106), he carefully qualifies claims such as Vitoria’s in articulating what is entailed by the “right to travel” in a cosmopolitan world (Vitoria 278). Specifically, Kant suggests that the “natural right of hospitality, i.e. the right of strangers, does not extend beyond those conditions which make it possible for them to attempt to enter into relations with the native inhabitants” (106). Should this attempt be refused, or should certain states “wisely” place restrictions on guests who have led “various Indian states” to “widespread wars, famine, insurrection, [and] treachery” (106), no other right may be claimed. For Kant, the cosmopolitan visitor is at once enlightened and corrupt; he is an agent who potentially both furthers global society and engenders global violence.

The elitism, self-regard, and imperial potential contained within the vision of the neutral or beneficent cosmopolitan visitor—in which wisdom accrues to, and ensues from, the one who leaves home—is manifest. Yet, the image of the cosmopolitan who rightfully visits others, and who thereby comes to enhance both self and society, persists, in both contemporary critical and affective cosmopolitanism. Nussbaum, for example, praises the “citizen of the world” who comes to care for “lives outside our [national] borders” as “deep, rich, and emotion-worthy” (Nussbaum, *Love* xiv). Appiah, too, embraces the salutary effects of leaving home. He compares reading in the “cosmopolitan spirit” with a “safari,” such that the term “safari” is not “a term of condescension,” but rather an admission to “enjoying tourism” as that which “celebrates and respects difference” (“Cosmopolitan” 206-07). Both contemporary critical and affective cosmopolitanisms imagine that the feelings of cosmopolitan subjects, operating within an extant global society, render cosmopolitan visitors quintessentially undamaging.
In other words, a body of writing that has focused on how we might become more cosmopolitan, or come to recognize more fully the ways in which we are already cosmopolitan, all but discounts the possibility that one who approaches difference with the proper degree of sympathy or shame might yet be an agent of injustice. Concomitantly, the necessity (in critical cosmopolitanism) or inevitability (in affective cosmopolitanism) of leaving home continues to be confidently proclaimed. As Craig Calhoun aptly observes in “The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travellers: Toward a Critique of Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism” (2002), cosmopolitanism remains uncomfortably close to “a good ethical orientation for those privileged to inhabit the frequent traveler lounges” (108). There is a prevalent tendency within current cosmopolitan thought to profess the salutary effects of going forth “to look” at others and “to explore” their cultures. The potential limits of global mutuality and equality are not considered fully, and neither is the possibility that the itinerant cosmopolitan might visit upon others affliction rather than wisdom.67

An important exception to this trend within contemporary theory is Jacques Derrida’s “On Cosmopolitanism” (1996). Derrida’s essay, which appears in English as the first section of On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness (2001), thinks through an ethics of cosmopolitanism that takes for granted that the visitor may be a guest or a parasite—that the visitor may be welcomed as a friend or rejected as a burden. I have just considered how the potentially devastating effects of visitation function to limit the rights of the visitor in Kant’s cosmopolitanism. Derrida considers the limitations of these rights from a different perspective. Specifically, he reflects on how Kant’s limitation of cosmopolitan right constrains the cosmopolitan responsibilities of the

67 The tendency of cosmopolitan theory to self-reflexively question, and simultaneously assert, the value of cross-cultural encounters is analogous to the tendency in anthropology to both question and defend ethnography. For an example of a seminal work committed to this kind of disciplinary critique, see Dell Hymes, ed., Reinventing Anthropology (1974).
one who is visited. Derrida, that is, shifts the locus of cosmopolitan action away from the one who sets out to see and explore the world to the one who welcomes the visitor. Both because Derrida’s shift is so original to cosmopolitan theory, and because Coetzee’s work engages with Derrida’s so intimately, it is necessary to outline in some detail Derrida’s intervention in cosmopolitan thought.

1. ii Derrida’s “On Cosmopolitanism”: Unconditional Hospitality and the Right to Visitation

Derrida’s shifting of the locus of cosmopolitan agency from the figure of the visitor to that of the host undoubtedly relates to the political context in which he presented his writing. As the preface to the English translation of *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* notes, Derrida’s essay addressed the 1996 International Parliament of Writers on the subject of cosmopolitan rights for asylum-seekers and immigrants in Europe generally, and in France especially (Critchley and Kearney viii). It is in this context, at a conference concerned with the severe restrictions placed on the rights of visitation of political refugees, that Derrida calls for “genuine innovation in the history of the right to asylum or the duty to hospitality”—and, by extension, for genuine innovation in cosmopolitan responsibility (4). Derrida states that his discussion of cosmopolitan hospitality aims to resist—and here he paraphrases the work of Hannah Arendt68—the “progressive abolition of a right to asylum” and, within Europe, the abandonment of “the classic recourse to repatriation or naturalization,” which followed from the upheavals of the inter-war period (6-7). The bulk of cosmopolitan theory might be said to imagine a cosmopolitan visitor who possesses the supposed virtue of being cosmopolitan; Derrida’s cosmopolitanism imagines a visitor who is dispossessed and who threatens dispossession.

68 Specifically, Derrida cites Arendt’s chapter “The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man” in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. 138
In approaching Kant with an eye to the injustices suffered by (rather than inflicted by) the cosmopolitan visitor, Derrida’s essay highlights especially the productive tension within Kant’s writing between a universal right to hospitality and the restrictions that immediately imposed on this right. Kant, argues Derrida, “seems at first to extend the cosmopolitan law to encompass universal hospitality without limit. Such is the condition of perpetual peace between all men. He expressly determines it as a natural law (droit)...both imprescriptible and inalienable” (20). This “natural law” is immediately qualified, however, in two significant ways: as Kant excludes “hospitality as a right of residence (Gastrecht), he limits it to the right of visitation (Besuchrescht)” (Derrida 21), while also making the law of hospitality “dependent on state sovereignty” (22). Derrida argues that this tension between universal hospitality and the hospitality issued by law is inevitable. As such, the primary questions for Derrida become those of “knowing how to transform and improve the law” and of “knowing if this improvement is possible within an historical space which takes place between the Law of an unconditional hospitality, offered a priori to every other, to all newcomers, whoever they may be, and the conditional laws of a right to hospitality” (22). Again, while Kant’s treatment of cosmopolitan visitation delineates the rights of the visitor, Derrida’s treatment of Kant reorients cosmopolitan right in terms of the responsibilities of the host.

Derrida’s own articulation of cosmopolitanism parallels his reading of Kant, insofar as it suggests that cosmopolitan responsibilities are paradoxically both unbounded and necessarily restricted. Such is the case put forth clearly by Gideon Baker, whose work places Derrida in dialogue with studies of international relations. Baker attends closely to the tension between

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69 Baker’s work positions Derrida’s thought as a preferable alternative to “liberal” cosmopolitanism. Specifically, Baker argues that Derridean cosmopolitanism demands “a greater decisionism than dialectical liberal-cosmopolitanism” (107).
conditional and unconditional cosmopolitan right in Derrida’s own writing.\(^\text{70}\) Baker concisely summarizes Derrida’s understanding of cosmopolitan right: “The limitless responsibility for the Other expressed in unconditional hospitality defines Derrida’s hyperbolic conception of cosmopolitan obligation” (Baker 117). Codified universals, in other words, will “always fail to be universal enough” (116). At the same time as he posits this ideal, however, Derrida asserts that conditional laws are necessary expressions of the unconditional Law of hospitality, which would otherwise “be in danger of remaining a pious and irresponsible desire, without form and without potency, and of even being perverted at any moment” (“On Cosmopolitanism” 23). As Derrida outlines in “The Principle of Hospitality”: “[A] cultural or linguistic community, a family, a nation, can not not suspend, at the least, even betray this principle of absolute hospitality: not protect a ‘home,’ without doubt, by guaranteeing property and what is ‘proper’ to itself against the unlimited arrival of the other; but also to attempt to render the welcome effective, determined, concrete, to put it into practice” (qtd. in Baker 122-23; emphasis Baker’s). For a community to be hospitable, then, it must retain the power to designate the “other” a guest.

What is true of the community is also true of the individual. Derrida writes: “Insofar as it has to do with the \textit{ethos}, that is, the residence, one’s home, the familiar place of dwelling, inasmuch as it is a manner of being there, the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners, \textit{ethics is hospitality}” (“On Cosmopolitanism” 16-17). The individual’s absolute obligation to the other comes from the fact that, for Derrida—and here once again I borrow from Baker’s clarifying reading—“I am actually constituted by the Other’s hospitable welcome of me such that I am now a response to, or hostage of, the Other” (Baker 117). At the same time, however, this absolute responsibility necessarily yields to a sense

\(^{70}\) Baker stands in contrast to Costas Douzinas, whose vision of cosmopolitanism centres on Derrida’s ideal of unconditional hospitality.
of self. Baker thusly glosses the condition of “home” that is requisite within Derrida’s cosmopolitanism: “My welcoming response to the Other’s gaze…requires my being at home with myself, my ipseity…There is always a host, but his sovereignty is permanently in question” (“On Cosmopolitanism” 110). The responsibilities of the host to the Other are limitless, and “identity (host) and difference (guest) are mutually constitutive in hospitality” (Baker 110). Yet, in order for the host to remain a host, that is, in order for the host to avoid the loss of home itself—which is one of the “perverse” effects of unconditional hospitality (Of Hospitality 53)—hospitality itself must be limited. Consequently, there is always an element of mastery in the practice of hospitality, insofar as it strives to make the other who is oneself at home with oneself—to incorporate the other into oneself.

Because within the history of hospitality there is “always possible perversion of the law of hospitality” (“On Cosmopolitanism” 17), cosmopolitanism-as-hospitality is, for Derrida, resolutely irresolvable: “All these questions remain obscure and difficult and we must neither conceal them from ourselves nor, for a moment, imagine ourselves to have mastered them” (22). Conditional laws and expressions of hospitality are necessary for avoiding the perversion of the unconditional Law of hospitality, but these conditional laws are themselves necessarily perversions of that Law. As Derrida outlines an Other-oriented practice for cosmopolitanism, he does so by defining cosmopolitan practice as that which begins with, and paradoxically preserves, the home: host and home are mutually constitutive.

As was noted in Chapter 3, criticism that deploys a Derridean reading of Coetzee’s work has tended to emphasize how Coetzee’s fiction enables an apprehension of singularity and difference, and suggests an obligation and responsibility towards this otherness that is limitless, unconditional, and therefore always in question. Derek Attridge, for example, argues that the
texts perform “irruptions of otherness into our familiar worlds, and they pose the question: what is our responsibility toward the other?” (xii). Marais similarly highlights the other-directed momentum of Coetzee’s work, arguing that Coetzee’s ethical trajectory is one that moves “toward a loss, rather than a consolidation, of self” (“Coming” 280). These readers locate the (arguably cosmopolitan) value of Coetzee’s work in its avowal of an unconditional Law of hospitality.

Notably, for these critics, the recognition and articulation of Derrida’s impossible ethical imperative supersedes concern with Derrida’s prescription, that cosmopolitan obligation needs to be expressed in conditional terms, lest it remain “a pious and irresponsible desire, without form and without potency” that is “in danger” of “being perverted at any moment” (“On Cosmopolitanism” 23). The critical focus on the unlimited ethical demands of Coetzee’s work therefore coincides with what Geoffrey Baker identifies as a general trend within Coetzeean criticism: to view Coetzee’s work as performing “pre-political” questioning of modes of representation.71 This tendency among Coetzee’s advocates to marginalize discussion of conditional politics within his work arguably contributes to a second critical trend identified by Baker, and mainly evident among Coetzee’s detractors: to suggest that Coetzee’s work is too mired in ethical paradox to be politically effective or affecting. Critical work on the apolitical or pre-political quality of Coetzee’s writing enables criticisms of Coetzee’s work that read it as “perverse” in its politics.72 Attentiveness to Derrida’s work on cosmopolitanism, in contrast, challenges Derridean readings of Coetzee that take as their ethical endpoints an infinite obligation

71 These critics mirror Coetzee’s own interest in the problem of how a writer might try, yet fail, to write outside of politics. See for example “Erasmus: Madness and Rivalry” in Giving Offense (1996).
72 For examples of critics who read Coetzee’s politics in Disgrace as perverse, see Chapter 4, pages 118-21.
to Otherness and lays the groundwork for a more nuanced analysis of Coetzee’s work in relation to Derridean thought.

By attending to Derrida’s treatment of cosmopolitan hospitality, specifically, I propose to qualify interpretations of Coetzee’s fictions, informed by Derrida’s work on hospitality more generally, that suggest those fictions stage or confirm unconditional hospitality in literary form. Rather than reading Coetzee as reiterating or upholding an impossible, limitless obligation to others, in which the home that is also the self is undone or lost, I suggest that Coetzee’s later writing can be interpreted as working to one side of Derridean thought. Derrida’s figure of cosmopolitan responsibility and obligation is a host, one who is at home. I argue that Coetzee’s figure of cosmopolitanism, like that of the Stoics and Kant, is a visitor who is, in crucial ways, not at home. Unlike the itinerant philosopher or the voyaging colonizer, however, Coetzee’s cosmopolitans are not endowed with superior knowledge or natural rights by virtue of their homelessness: they neither reveal humanity nor necessarily demand humane treatment. Much of cosmopolitan theory argues for the rights and rightness of the cosmopolitan visitor. Derrida’s cosmopolitanism argues for the responsibilities and obligations of the cosmopolitan host. Coetzee’s writing, I contend, reflects on both strains of cosmopolitan thought by considering the cosmopolitan visitor’s responsibilities and obligations.

2.i. Reading Cosmopolitanism and Visitation in J.M. Coetzee

To move towards articulating what I am calling cosmopolitan visitation in J.M. Coetzee’s work, I examine how visitation has been read—notably and explicitly by the literary critic María López—in terms of Derrida’s ethics of hospitality: the visitor, in Disgrace and elsewhere, is conceived as one to whom one owes unconditional hospitality, or as one who is unconditionally
hospitable. In order to suggest the possible limitations of this reading, I go on to offer an alternative reading of visitation in *Disgrace*, suggesting that the visitor might alternately be read as one who does not possess a “right” to receive, or to offer, unconditional hospitality. Through a reading of *Diary of a Bad Year*, I argue that the cosmopolitan, rather than being conceived as a benign or demanding visitor or a hospitable host, might be productively imagined as a nonhuman visitor, whom others experience as strange. I conclude by speculating how we might similarly conceive of the cosmopolitan reader in nonhuman terms.

The figure of the visitor recurs throughout Coetzee’s fiction, as María López establishes in *Acts of Visitation: The Narrative of J.M. Coetzee* (2011). López, who has engaged with the question of visitors in Coetzee’s texts more directly than any other critic, has proceeded by judging Coetzee’s visitors against an ideal of Derridean hospitality. Specifically, López juxtaposes “intrusive visitation,” which she “condemn[s],” with an ongoing “sense of transience,” which she lauds as an act of visitation that is also an ethical act of unconditional hospitality (xii-xiii). Citing Derrida’s “later works” such as *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money, The Gift of Death, The Politics of Friendship, Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, and *Of Hospitality*, López proposes that “there are important affinities between the ethical proposal of J.M. Coetzee and Jacques Derrida: both of them appeal to a logic of excess, heterogeneity, and unconditionality—a logic of ‘not enough’—that would suspend or interrupt the prevailing logic of calculation, reciprocity or filiation” (xxi). “Unconditional ethical acts, such as those we continually glimpse in Coetzee’s novels,” argues López, are “ethically exemplary” (xiii). López concludes that Coetzee’s novels “appeal to a logic of ‘not enough’ that may transform…unequal and violent socio-historical conditions,” especially in South Africa (xxi). Like Attridge and Marais, López suggests that Coetzee’s novels present readers with “[t]he ultimate ethical lesson—a lesson of unconditional
hospitality, using Derridean terminology—to be learnt” (“Can We Be Friends Here?” 926). The reading is compelling in its comprehensive claim that Coetzee’s writing operates on the “perverse” fringes of Derrida’s cosmopolitan thought, teaching the unconditional hospitality that renders the self an “other.”

This same comprehensiveness, however, is also a potential weakness of those interpretations that figure Coetzee’s works as parables for Derridean ethics. Specifically, reading Coetzee’s novels as modelling an ethics of dispossession may preclude the ways in which scenes of hospitality are highly conditional, as I believe they are in the final visit in Disgrace. Attending to the conditionality of Coetzee’s hospitality, I suggest, points towards how Coetzee’s engagement with Derrida exceeds approbation of a universal, unconditional law of hospitality by extending to a consideration of how the instantiation of hospitality necessitates political negotiation. What is more, I suggest that Coetzee’s representation of the cosmopolitan visitor differs from Derrida’s, insofar as the unconditional welcome of the visitor is not necessarily the ideal, impossible Law against which attempts to establish cosmopolitanism are judged. Rather, as is the case in Kant’s “Third Definitive Article of a Perpetual Peace,” Coetzee’s work provides a compelling argument as to why cosmopolitanism might require that the right to hospitality demanded by the visitor be restricted, refused, or, indeed, not assumed at all.

Taking the example of Disgrace as a case in point, we can see the degree to which acts of visitation in Coetzee’s work challenge rather than uphold an ideal of unconditional hospitality. López offers a reading of Disgrace that finds an implicitly cosmopolitan hope in the extension of hospitality to the visitor. She argues that a “state of dispossession” characterizes the ethical trajectory of the novel: Lurie “does not choose,” yet becomes “enmeshed in,” a “non-proprietal attitude towards the land” that Lucy “embodies”: Lucy evinces a “transient relation to the land,
entailing no sense of property or possession” (936-37). Both characters, in this reading, end the novel as visitors to the land which they inhabit. The “hopeful possibility of transformation” nascent in both Lucy and Lurie’s dispossession is confirmed, argues López, in “Lurie’s final act of visitation and Lucy’s act of hospitality” (935-36). In one of the last scenes of the novel, Lurie approaches Lucy in her garden: “‘Will you come in and have some tea?’ She [Lucy] makes the offer as if he [David] were a visitor. Good. Visitorship, visitation: a new footing, a new start” (218). Here, as elsewhere in Coetzee’s work, argues López, characters’ capacities to adopt the role of visitor or guest is a “utopian” aspect of Coetzee’s writing that gestures towards “a potential redemption of the hostilities and tensions involved in different kinds of personal relationships” (937; 933). López argues that Lucy’s welcome of Lurie conveys an ethical lesson in unconditional hospitality, and that this lesson is one that Lurie comes to adopt, however unwillingly.

Within this reading, the burden of cosmopolitan ethics seems to fall on Lucy, whose body and womb, consequently, become the implicit sites of cosmopolitan hope. One might, following López, read Lucy’s decision to stay—and her later care of Pollux—as evidence of the unconditional hospitality she arguably embodies. This reading, however, problematically echoes Lurie’s understanding of Lucy’s decision to stay on the farm as “an invitation” to the men “to return” (158). Lucy herself suggests there is “another way of looking at it”; namely, that the men “see themselves as debt collectors” who see her as “owing something” (158). With this speculation, Lucy shifts the centre of ethical agency from herself and her purported “invitation” to the men and their motivations for visiting: the visiting men, she implies, are claiming what she imagines they feel is their “right” to her feminized body. She moves the discussion away from hospitality and into visitation. It is a shift that structures the novel. Lurie, importantly, echoes this
movement when he positions himself as a visitor in his trip to Lucy’s garden. Indeed, if there is hope in the scene of Lurie’s visit to Lucy’s home, it lies not so much in Lucy’s act of “unconditional” hospitality as in Lurie’s act of provisional visitation.

In other words, while I agree that the last scene of welcome is arguably the novel’s strongest articulation of its highly qualified hope, I suggest that reading the scene as a lesson in unconditional hospitality is somewhat unsatisfactory on two counts. First, it overlooks the degree to which Lucy’s welcome of David is conditional. Second, focusing on Lucy’s welcome of David marginalizes the remarkable fact that David accepts the conditions of Lucy’s welcome. If there is hope in Lurie’s act of visitation, such hope does not lie in a narrative of possession into dispossession in which the self is given over to the other in a renunciation of privilege. The ideal of unconditional hospitality is not the rule against which to measure the farm’s present or future promise as a cosmopolitan space. That is, the visitor in Disgrace is not an other whose demand for hospitality reduces (or elevates) the host to “a state of dispossession”: Lurie’s visit to Lucy does not (re)establish either his or her status as a visitor on the land. Rather, if there is cosmopolitan hope in the scene, it lies in the fact that Lurie’s visit to Lucy is highly conditional.

Indeed, conditions of property structure and delimit the interaction between father and daughter. After all, although Lucy has given up “the land” to Petrus, “title deed and all,” rendering her a “tenant” (205), she has done so only “as long as the house remains mine” (204). Lucy is adamant on this point: “But the house remains mine, I repeat that. No one enters the house without my permission” (204). Lucy, far from being, in David’s words and in López’s argument, “merely a transient” (117), is determined to remain in the house that dates “from the time of large families, of guests by the wagonful” and which she originally moved into as a “member of a commune” (60). The allusions to colonial history balanced against a shorter history
of shared property draw Lucy’s claims to the house into question. Yet, the narrative arc of 
Disgrace charts Lucy’s consolidation of her claims to her home, which her father “helped” her to 
buy (60), as her own. When Lurie first arrives on the farm, Lucy “comes to greet him, holding her 
arms wide, embracing him, kissing him on the cheek” (59). Lucy’s invitation to tea, in contrast, 
implicitly asserts her ownership of the house and differs sharply from Lurie’s initial “nice 
welcome” from a “nice girl” (59). Lucy’s welcome of a visitor at the end of Disgrace is an act of 
hospitality that is highly conditional and that foregrounds her negotiated role within a patriarchal 
political system.  

Lurie’s visit, in turn, is one that is attentive to the conditions that Lucy has negotiated, 
namely, that the house is hers. As Lurie approaches the house where he will be invited for tea, he 
notices in the distance “specks that must be the wild geese, Lucy’s visitors from afar” (216). 
Lurie’s distance from the house and invocation of the word “visitor” align him with the geese, but 
also with the men who have raped Lucy: the two are juxtaposed throughout the novel. For 
example, in the novel’s central chapter, Lucy is “visited” by three geese, which prefigure the 
three men who will rape her. Of the geese, she says, “I feel so lucky to be visited. To be the one 
chosen” (88). Of the three men whom Lurie calls “the men who visited them” (107), “their 
visitors” (115), and “the three visitors” (159), Lucy suggests: “I think they are rapists first and 
foremost…I think they do rape” (158). Just as the wild geese “come back every year” (88), Lucy 
fears the same will be true of her other three visitors: “They will come back for me” (158). For 
much of Disgrace, the novel invites comparison between Lurie and “the men,” not only because 
Lurie rapes Melanie, but also because he insists on a patriarchal right over Lucy’s body, much as 
Lucy imagines the men who have raped her do. Rather histrionically, Lurie views himself as the

73 As Lucy explains to Lurie, “[s]ubjectively I am a woman alone…Petrus may not be a big man but he is 
big enough for someone small like me” (204).
one who must be “sacrifice[d]” for Lucy’s peace (209), and expresses his reluctance to “stand back” from his role as father (210). Lucy, he feels remains “his people” (201; italics in original). Although he moves out of Lucy’s house, he proclaims that he will stay in the area “for as long as is necessary,” and maintains that “[t]he problem is with the people she lives among” (209). What is hopeful in the final scene of hospitality, then, is not its unconditional quality, but rather that, despite his feelings, Lurie is tentative in approaching his daughter: he is, we sense, prepared to depart. The effect of Lurie’s withdrawal and distance—his relinquishment of his “right” to residence in another’s home—is salutary. We read with relief that Lucy is, “suddenly, the picture of health” (218). Lurie is, at this moment, more like the geese than the men: he is a benign visitor.

If there is cosmopolitan hope for strengthened equality and mutuality in this scene, it resonates not so much with a Derridean ethics of hospitality as with a Kantian ethics of visiting. In his reticence to assume a “right” to enter Lucy’s home, Lurie practices what Kant describes as the cosmopolitan ethic in which the visitor may “attempt to enter into relations” with others but must be prepared to recognize that a “natural right to hospitality” does “not extend beyond those conditions” (106). Lucy, also, makes an “attempt to enter into relations” with her neighbours. By foregrounding living histories of patriarchy, colonialism, and apartheid, however, the novel challenges the supposition that either character is in a position to offer hospitality to others. The novel, that is to say, questions whether “Lucy’s land” is ever rightfully hers to give up, just as it questions whether “David’s daughter” is ever really his to let go. Dispossession is not the end of cosmopolitanism, but rather its starting point. Equality and mutuality do not emerge through unconditional acts of welcoming others, but rather through highly conditional acts of visiting them.
I have argued, through a reading of *Disgrace*, that Coetzee’s later fiction suggests the potentially cosmopolitan effects of a limited hospitality that resonates with Kantian thought. I do not wish, however, simply to replace a Derridean reading of Coetzee’s cosmopolitanism with a Kantian one. As I read the development of Coetzee’s treatment of visitation across his oeuvre, that treatment has progressed from a concern with the ethical possibilities of the limitation of visitation to a concern with the impossibilities of such limitation. I argue that in *Diary of a Bad Year*, especially, Coetzee depicts a world in which visitation is inevitable and therefore exceeds the Kantian paradigm. To clarify: Kant’s articulation of a cosmopolitan right of hospitality imagines a society that is moving towards a cosmopolitan end in which humanity is linked in a “universal community” (107). Though sociability is inescapable, retreat is an option (as it is for Lurie, at least in relation to Lucy), and cosmopolitan community structured by clearly delineated boundaries and borders is yet possible within this imaginary. One might stay at, or return to, a home where one is not always already a visitor. *Diary of a Bad Year*, in contrast, suggests that, as a cosmopolitan subject, one cannot control whether one is a visitor any more than, in Derrida’s essay, one can control whether one is a host. That is, if for Derrida, “ethics is hospitality” (“On Cosmopolitanism” 16), then one might argue that, within Coetzee’s novel, ethics, at least for the cosmopolitan, is visitation. It is not something which can be avoided. At the same time, however, Coetzee’s novel suggests an ethics of cosmopolitan visitation that might be instantiated by eschewing the notion that such visitation is a natural right or naturally right.

2. ii *Coetzee’s Cosmopolitan Visitors*

Within *Diary of a Bad Year*, the Kantian vision of the cosmopolitan visitor who attempts to enter into relations with others, but then deigns to leave again, is conjured and critiqued in the
early pages of the text. The fiction includes a series of essays by a well-known, aging writer, whose initials are JC, a record of this writer’s private thoughts, and finally, a record of the private thoughts of Anya, the beautiful woman whom JC hires as a secretary to help him complete the series of essays. Excerpts from the essays appear at the top of each page, while JC’s and Anya’s thoughts respectively occupy the middle and bottom portions of each page. One of the early essays by JC examines the mythic origins of the nation-state. Such myths, argues JC, suggest that “the state is always there before we are”—“we are born into the state”—even as this same “we” is implicated in the state’s “coming into being” (3). JC imagines a counter-narrative to this theory of a community that is at once natural and sanctioned through his reading of the film *The Seven Samurai*. In this “Kurosawan theory of the origin of the state” (5), which is also a dream about the end of conquest, the state comes into being when “bandits hit on the idea of systematizing their visits” to neighbouring villages and the villagers turn to the samurai for protection (6). The “wishful thinking” in Kurosawa’s film occurs after “the samurai are victorious” and offer to continue to protect the villagers, “to take the place of the bandits”: “[T]he villagers decline: they ask the samurai to leave, and the samurai comply” (6). Such an ending, argues JC, contravenes histories of the “birth or rebirth” of the state, in which the bandits and the samurai, so to speak, *always* stay: predators and protectors alike “become parasites” (6). The “wishful thinking” of the film maps onto what might be called the “wishful thinking” of Kant’s vision of cosmopolitan humanity. The nation-state, in Coetzee’s novel, is not an originary home, but that which is constituted by welcome and unwelcome “visitors.”

The questioning of originary nationality extends from JC’s essays to the representation of the text’s characters. *Diary of a Bad Year* is, along with *Slow Man* and *Summertime*, among Coetzee’s most explicitly global novels. Both JC and Anya traverse national boundaries and lack
a clear sense of national rootedness. Anya, who “likes to present herself as a Filipina,” has “never lived in the Philippines” (70). Her father was “an Australian diplomat” who met Anya’s mother at “a cocktail party in Manila” (70). While Anya went “to international schools all over the place (Washington, Cairo, Grenoble)” (70), “[w]hat benefit she derived from that international schooling is not clear” (71): she “speaks French” but “has not heard of Voltaire” (71). Her travel, however, is continual: at the end of the novel, she has moved on to Brisbane (191). Like Anya’s, JC’s origins are a source of some confusion: it is unclear for much of the work whether he is from South America or South Africa. Initially his neighbour Mrs. Saunders tells Anya that her new employer is from Colombia (47). There is an implication that for these cosmopolitans, there is no clear homeland to which to return.

It is significant, then, that Coetzee represents these cosmopolitans and their relationship in language rich in references to visitation. Perhaps even more than in Disgrace, the various connotations of the term are in play: characters variously bring unto others a blessing or a curse, care or punishment. Anya, for example, “visits” JC in the mornings (209), and he finds her presence frankly angelic.74 When he first encounters her, in the laundry room of their apartment complex, she is “an apparition” (3). When he inquires as to her origins, she reaffirms what is to him her obvious divinity: “Why, from upstairs, kind sir” (31). Anya is an angel who is, to JC, the “incarnation of heavenly beauty” (60). The reader is reminded that “visit” may be “[o]f the Deity” (“Visit, v.” def. 1a). Visitors, like the men who Lucy believes “do rape” and the geese who come to the farm in Disgrace (158), are not apprehended by others as distinctly “human,” but seem to

74 Although Anya’s “previous employment” has been in the “hospitality industry”—“or else perhaps human resources” (13)—she is, significantly, unemployed in the moment that JC offers her secretarial work, promising her “a rate per hour which, even if she had once been the tsarina of hospitality, must have given her pause to reflect” (18). The reification of hospitality as ethics is at once satirized and gently pushed to the side.
materialize from another world. When JC thinks of how he “visits” the birds in the park (209), it is an affirmation of his strangeness to them (though not of his angelic form). Within *Diary of a Bad Year*, inescapable sociality enacted through cosmopolitan visitation does not point towards a universal human community, but towards an ongoing experience of apprehending others, and being apprehended by others, as nonhuman. Visitors, in other words, appear as what Alan Bourassa calls “nonhuman figures”: the animal, the machine, and the divine (61). These figures are not, as Bourassa makes clear, “essentially nonhuman” (61), but constitutive of the human. At the same time, they are frequently omitted from accounts of the “human,” such as those within cosmopolitan theory, that focus on subjectivity and identity: “much that goes to make up the human is lost in the human’s account of itself” (Bourassa 69). By foregrounding the nonhumanity of the human, Coetzee’s text suggests that an account of cosmopolitanism that centres on human subjectivity omits how cosmopolitan subjects are, and may seem to others to be, otherworldly visitors.

The novel’s interest in the nonhumanity of visitation recalls a brief review by Coetzee, published in 2008, of a recent edition of Daniel Defoe’s *An Essay on the History and Reality of Apparitions*, in which Coetzee considers how Defoe imagines “visitations” (92). In Coetzee’s gloss of Defoe’s text, visits are enacted by “angels” and “devils” that either “guide us on the path God has prescribed for us” or “try to lead us astray” (92). “For those who think that angels belong to a superstitious age,” continues Coetzee, “Michel Serres’ *Angels* (1993) may be a corrective” (93). Coetzee offers this reading of Serres’s book by way of explanation: “We are in a transition, says Serres, from a cosmology that treats of physical objects to a cosmology of messages. The map of the universe is unceasingly being redrawn for us by angel-messengers. If we don’t see them, that is because it is in the nature of the messenger to disappear in favor of the message”
“Angel,” as Serres reminds his readers, comes from the Greek for messenger (8). In his book on angel-messengers, Serres considers “our planet as an immense interconnecting system of messages” (29), in which “[a]ll we really are is intermediaries, eternally passing among others who are also intermediaries” (9). Serres’s text offers a cosmology in which angels and devils may “pierce through our illusory reality” with knowledge “of an extraordinary state that is unknown to us” (20): they may conjure for us what we have omitted from accounts of our own humanity.

*Diary of a Bad Year* maps out a similar cosmology: one in which Anya’s visitation inaugurates what JC calls a “metaphysical ache” (7), as well as “a bad dream” about “dying and being guided to the gateway to oblivion by a young woman” (69). The messenger of mortality surprises JC and is all the stranger because of the surprise: “[H]ow odd a messenger, and how unsuitable!” (61).

As we saw in Chapter 1, within contemporary affective cosmopolitanism, global sociality is taken as evidence of a universal human community; within critical cosmopolitanism, it is cited as an urgent reason for cultivating a universal human community. *Diary of a Bad Year*, however, eschews instantiating such community. “Humanity,” in fact, is often experienced as nonhuman.

I suggest that it is in this nonhumanity that what I will call the text’s cosmopolitanism crystallizes. Cosmopolitan theory, whether affective or critical, proceeds on an assumption of an equal humanity, united by human reason or by shared human feeling. This humanity yields particular rights. *Diary of a Bad Year*, however, suggests “human” equality only in an equal potential for nonhumanity. As such, the text calls into question the “human” rights that ostensibly accrue to a “citizen of the world.” Cosmopolitan practice, in this instance, is not a matter of claiming humanity and what is due to us by virtue of our humanity, but of questioning what it is that we do claim by virtue of our humanity. Kant articulates a cosmopolitanism that hinges on a
right to visitation (albeit a limited right); Coetzee’s novel proffers a vision of cosmopolitanism that foregrounds the responsibility of the visitor who pierces through others’ reality.

The limitlessness of cosmopolitan responsibility within *Diary of a Bad Year*, as well as its impossibility to be fully realized, resonates with, even as it inverts, Derrida’s articulation of cosmopolitan right. Derrida imagines cosmopolitan obligation to the other in terms of an impossible unconditional hospitality; Coetzee imagines cosmopolitan obligation to the other in terms of impossible conditional visitation. *Diary of a Bad Year*, that is, suggests an ethics of visitation in which the visitor is prepared, impossibly, to leave the other a home. The willingness to take care of JC’s home (ill-managed as it is) finally distinguishes the angelic Anya from her partner, the diabolic Alan. Alan, after all, also proposes to be the “guardian angel” of JC, and to take “good care” of him by hacking into his financial accounts and secretly investing his savings in ventures that promise profitable interest rates (85). The injustice of the kind of “care” that involves illicitly taking over another’s estate and that justifies itself by claiming a “right” to do so is admitted to by Alan himself. When Anya, suspicious of Alan’s motives, asks “[w]hat kind of care is good care,” he replies “[a]sk no questions and you will be told no lies” (85). Alan’s response aligns him with the speaker of Rudyard Kipling’s “A Smuggler’s Song,” who cautions his audience, a young girl, that “[T]hem that asks no questions isn’t told a lie / Watch the wall, my darling, while the Gentlemen go by!” (3-4). The smugglers’ ventures grease the market: “Brandy for the Parson / Baccy for the Clerk” (7-8). Alan’s crimes, like the Gentlemen’s illicit activities, are indistinguishable from pervading capitalism.

Alan’s version of guardianship is juxtaposed with Anya’s decision that she will, in fact and not just in dream, care for JC “on the way” to death (224): “Good night, Senor C, I will whisper in his ear: sweet dreams, and flights of angels, and all the rest” (227). She resolves to be with him
until he must “let go” and to “clean up afterwards” (226). Her ministrations, unlike Alan’s, are attuned to the fleetingness and precariousness of another’s home in the world, rather than to the accumulation of wealth. They are echoed by the actions of JC’s neighbour, Mrs. Saunders, an “otherworldly” character who worries for the frogs in the nearby riverbed during a heat wave (22). Mrs. Saunders initially proposes to take the frogs into her home, but JC warns against it, intimating that such an effort may result in more harm than good: “You won’t know where to dig” (211). Mrs. Saunders settles for transporting a plastic bowl of water to the site—“in case the little ones get thirsty, she explains” (211). Both Anya and Mrs. Saunders enact a form of visitation that is simultaneously a kind of leave-taking.

It is such leave-taking (and not unconditional welcome) which is, perhaps, “the ultimate ethical lesson to be learnt” by the aging JC and within Diary of a Bad Year as a whole. Anya’s farewell to her employer is the climax of the work. Her parting embrace is accompanied by a heavenly chorus. She offers JC a hug:

*Behold, who can tell the workings of the Lord,* I thought to myself. At the back of my mind there was a line of Yeats too, though I could not pin down the words, only the music. Then I took the required step forward and embraced her, and for a whole minute we stood clasped together, this shrunken old man and this earthly incarnation of heavenly beauty, and could have continued for a second minute, she would have permitted that, being generous of herself; but I thought, *Enough is enough,* and let her go. (190)

The cosmopolitan hope of the scene does not emerge from a sense that humaneness or humanity is being shared between these two different creatures; it does not seem to stem from Anya’s generosity of herself or from JC’s generosity of himself. Rather, equality and mutuality flow from JC’s sense that his welcome into Anya’s arms is not his right: he accepts that he must “let her go”
(190). The encounter with another is not cosmopolitan in itself. Rather, the encounter becomes cosmopolitan through the acknowledgment that one is not owed a welcome.

That JC’s willingness to end his embrace of Anya coincides with the fleeting music of a line by Yeats, a poet of aging and death, is not insignificant. As JC accepts both the blessing of the embrace and its transience, so too does he relinquish any claim to what Yeats, in “Sailing to Byzantium,” calls the “artifice of eternity” (line 24). Yeats’s poems, like the “heavenly chorus,” are that which JC prepares to leave as a visitor, not just in Anya’s arms, but in the world. Theories of cosmopolitan reading have tended to focus on the question of how the reader responds to the “otherness” of the text—of how, and under what conditions, the reader visits or welcomes the “otherness” of the text on terms of equality. Contemporary theories of cosmopolitan reading have tended to position the reader as the visitor who benignly comes to feel for “others” in ostensibly cosmopolitan ways through engagement with literary texts, or as the visitor who comes to feel the self-as-other in ostensibly cosmopolitan ways through engagement with literary texts. Coetzee’s *Diary of a Bad Year* suggests yet another model for cosmopolitan reading: one in which the reader of others is potentially neither benign nor receptive, but rather taking her or his leave. That is, a model in which the reader is prepared to negotiate a limited engagement with the otherness of the text. The suggestion not only emerges at the level of character but also of form.

Specifically, the role and responsibilities of the individual reader in shaping the text is underlined throughout the split narrative. The reader immediately faces the question of how to read one section or one page in relation to the next: does one complete the essay before turning to the diaries? Read each page from top to bottom? Or negotiate a different order based on interest and accident? The task of answering such questions underscores readers’ power to both create and dismantle the text. What is more, the novel foregrounds its own vulnerability to the
“messages” its readers bring, as well as the otherworldliness of those readers. As Rebecca Walkowitz argues, on the level of reading JC’s narrative line, it is “impossible to establish whether the essays we are reading are the author’s words or the author’s words altered by the typist’s purposeful editing and the computer’s automatic interventions” (“Comparative” 578). A nonhuman machine (aligned with the diabolic Alan) and an angelic typist have infiltrated the language of a “human” character who is constituted by the nonhuman forces of mechanical reproduction and metaphysical inspiration. The form of the text invites reflection on how the reader affects its creation, and on the degree to which this act is “human.” At the same time, however, the split narrative invites readers to reflect on the restrictions on their capacity for determining the shape of the text. The novel is one that encourages the reader to abandon one storyline for another and to order the story differently each time the text is revisited. Even as the reader moves through the text, she leaves behind that particular reading.

*Diary of a Bad Year,* like so much of Coetzee’s fiction, grapples with the question of how we read. To take up this question in terms of the cosmopolitan visitation modelled within, and fostered by, the novel is to ask, in turn: as the reader pronounces the end and the ends of the text, what message has she sent? What does she assume the text owes her? What would it mean to “let go” of the fiction? To endeavour to answer these questions is to read self-consciously, such that the “self” is not necessarily a rational, feeling “human,” but a strange visitor that, like the cosmopolitan text itself, affects the world in unintended and unmanageable ways. It is this idea of the “self,” I have argued, that Coetzee proffers in his representation and performance of the characters John Coetzee (from the fictionalized memoirs) and Elizabeth Costello. Both of these characters look to literature to model or instantiate passionate engagement with others, yet reading and writing marks their ongoing estrangement from others. They are, finally, peripheral
to the lives of others. J.M. Coetzee’s cosmopolitan literature challenges its readers to acknowledge the limits of their cosmopolitan feeling.
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162


163


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