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Globalisation and Critical Cosmopolitanism in Contemporary British Fiction

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the connection between globalisation and the prospect of cosmopolitanism by examining four contemporary British works of fiction. The concept of cosmopolitanism concerns people's open attitudes towards foreign others and their endeavour to reach out across differences. New cosmopolitanism arises in the context of globalisation: it is embedded in locality and stems from the situation of global coexistence and multicultural conviviality. In this thesis, the fictions I examine are Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled* (1995), Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* (2005), Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), and Hari Kunzru's *Transmission* (2004). The issues I address in my analyses include the radical East/West encounter after 1989, the new condition of 'glocalisation', the dynamics within diasporic communities and the rise of cosmopolitan culture, and the emergence of new media and technology in the age of informatisation. The thesis is structured both thematically and chronologically: while each chapter addresses a different aspect of cosmopolitanism, the topics under discussion are sequenced according to their relevance to contemporary life. The thesis as a whole illuminates the complexity of contemporary cosmopolitanism: the fictions collectively demonstrate both the challenges and possibilities in envisioning cosmopolitanism in the context of globalisation.

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Responsibility for any remaining errors in this thesis is mine.

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Introduction

Globalisation, as Roland Robertson defines it, refers to both ‘the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole’.¹ Robertson’s definition of globalisation contains two layers of meaning. On one hand, it foregrounds the idea of ‘interconnectedness’ in the age of globalisation (which relates, for example, to ease of travel, to cultural transmission, and to established information networks). On the other, it highlights people’s correspondingly emergent consciousness of being in the world, which further suggests a transition from nation-oriented ethics to global ethics that requires a growing attentiveness to foreign others across the world. This emerging global consciousness corresponds to the idea of cosmopolitanism, a concept coined in ancient Greece but with particular relevance to our contemporary life. With its root meaning being ‘the citizen of the world’, cosmopolitanism, at its most basic, should be understood in terms of the ethical dimension: it is about a penetrating sensitivity to the world beyond one’s immediate milieu, and an expanded moral and political commitment to individuals and groups outside one’s local or national community. While in the past, cosmopolitanism was a utopian idea too abstract to be put into practice, the new cosmopolitanism that arises in the age of globalisation is an ‘actually existing cosmopolitanism’ – to use Bruce Robbins’ term – since people’s extended concerns for global others no longer rely on abstract faith in a common humanity, but rather stem from the situation of global coexistence, daily cross-border encounters and interactions, and multicultural conviviality.² I contend that in the new age of globalisation, fiction becomes an effective tool to explore the nuances of cosmopolitanism. Identifying the advantages

¹ Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*, (London: Sage, 1992), p. 8.

² Bruce Robbins, ‘Introduction Part I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism’, in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. by Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp.1-19.

of fictional analysis, Rosi Braidotti, Patrick Hanafin, and Bolette Blaagaard point out that ‘the cosmopolitan perspective is not, in fact, one that is accessible through perception, only through imagination, because we cannot see the whole of humanity’.³ Creating a realm of imagination, fiction is apt to dramatise the complexity of daily life, and it helps us to discern even the smallest traces that tend to escape our attention in reality. In this regard, fiction provides a privileged medium for the interpretation of the new cosmopolitanism, which is rooted in current globalised conditions but remains a weak force yet to be detected in contemporary life.

Fiction is not detached from reality; rather, it is closely connected with reality and actively responds to it. To be specific, Paul Jay notes that English literature in the age of globalisation has become increasingly transnational and it cannot be understood simply within the national sphere.⁴ As Jay observes, English literature is ‘becoming defined less by a nation than by a language’: it is produced not only by writers from England but also by a host of writers working in their home countries or diasporic communities around the world, and it is circulated in the global marketplace and read by people from diverse backgrounds.⁵ At present, the national border no longer marks the boundary of literary production and circulation, and neither does the nation-state set limits on the literary imagination. As John Su states in his study of the relationship between imagination and the contemporary novel, the literary imagination is not to be understood as a ‘universal and unchanging phenomenon, but as something that is historically produced’.⁶ While fictions in the past mainly served national interests when they were circulated within the national sphere and did not have such close connections with the wider world, contemporary fictions are starting to respond to

³ Rosi Braidotti, Patrick Hanafin, and Bolette Blaagaard, ‘Introduction’, in *After Cosmopolitanism*, ed. by Rosi Braidotti, Patrick Hanafin, and Bolette Blaagaard (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 1-7 (p. 5).

⁴ Paul Jay, *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

⁵ Paul Jay, ‘Beyond Discipline? Globalization and the Future of English’, *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 116.1 (2001), 32-47 (p. 33).

⁶ John Su, *Imagination and the Contemporary Novel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 5.

global issues and have the potential of imagining a cosmopolitan future, helping, as Su notes, to ‘expand the boundaries of community beyond the obvious markers of affiliation such as nation, race, religion, and class’.⁷ In this thesis, I will be considering novels written by Kazuo Ishiguro, Zadie Smith, Nadeem Aslam, and Hari Kunzru. These writers have all shifted attention from the nation to the world, and they endeavour to explore how people may cope with complex realities in an age of globalisation, and with living in relation to others. While they are all ‘British’ by nationality, they have all been greatly influenced by international culture. These writers have belonged, or continue to belong, to more than one nation, region or state: Ishiguro was born in Japan; Smith has a Jamaican mother and an English father; Aslam was born in Gujranwala, Pakistan; and Hari Kunzru is a British-Indian novelist and journalist. They participate in systems different to those in which they were born and educated or those where their novels were first published, and they consciously challenge the oneness of the nation in their work. Furthermore, in a way, these writers’ British nationality, which appears to contradict the idea of cosmopolitanism, can even be an asset because they are well-placed to write back to the historical exclusionary cultural values of the English literary canon with a more cosmopolitan outlook.

Although the authors I have selected are far from the only contemporary writers who hold cross-cultural positions or challenge the primacy of the nation, the following works by them are particularly helpful when examining the relationship between globalisation and cosmopolitanism. The four fictions to be examined in this thesis are Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Unconsoled* (1995), Zadie Smith’s *On Beauty* (2005), Nadeem Aslam’s *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), and Hari Kunzru’s *Transmission* (2004). These fictions address a series of newly emergent issues in an era of globalisation that particularly challenges the coherence of the nation and promotes our understanding of the interconnected world. The issues I address in my analyses include the radical East/West encounter after 1989, the trend of mass migration and the phenomenon of ‘glocalisation’, the dynamics within diasporic communities and

⁷ Su, *Imagination and the Contemporary Novel*, p. 156.

the rise of a new global culture, and the advance of new media and technology that may help the establishment of wider virtual communities. I attempt in the thesis to achieve a comprehensive understanding of diverse types of cosmopolitanism in different global contexts while also tracing the development of cosmopolitanism and its relation to the past, present, and future. My chosen texts present a critical view of cosmopolitanism by foregrounding both the challenges and possibilities of our age, serving to forge dialogues between individualism and collectivism, locality and globalism, national affiliation and world citizenship. In their representation of continuous segregation, suspicion, and hostility in world society, these works demonstrate the danger in assuming that popular forms of cosmopolitanism already exist. They also show the possibilities of globalised cosmopolitanism by dramatising the frequency of cross-cultural communications, interactions, and the acquisition of deeper mutual understanding on a global level. Recurring tropes, such as love, beauty, travel, time, and space feature throughout the novels, functioning to expand ethical domains beyond the shifting borders of the nation. What is noteworthy is not only their thematic choices but the narrative techniques they employ: by adopting a series of narrative techniques, such as flashback, juxtaposition, and surrealism, these works bring the notion of home and globe together and foreground the free joining of separate entities in the interstices of culture.

This thesis opens with an analysis of Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled* which attempts to explore the birth of 'new cosmopolitanism' after 1989. The fall of the Berlin Wall signalled the breaking down of the boundaries maintained by two superpowers – the United States and the Soviet Union – during the Cold War, and it symbolised the re-opening of suppressed forms of human contact. Set in a European town modelled on post-1989 East-Central Europe, *The Unconsoled* foregrounds the lingering nostalgia for the communist past and the flawed neoliberal promises that may lead to an exploitative pseudo-cosmopolitan future. Capturing the atmosphere of uncertainty during that transitional period, *The Unconsoled* refuses to take an over-optimistic view of the new cosmopolitanism, warning us instead of its complexity. Chapter Two and Chapter Three investigate how cosmopolitanism is born in the 'glocalised' spaces

where the local is increasingly connected with the global against the backdrop of global migration and cultural conviviality. Chapter Two focuses on Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* and examines the feasibility of 'vernacular cosmopolitanism', which is a type of cosmopolitanism that thrives at the margins of society. I pay special attention to the roles played by dispossessed and marginalised people in the context of glocalisation as they are represented in the novel. Set in the new millennium in the United States, *On Beauty* illustrates the dynamics of glocal space, highlighting the value of daily cross-cultural interactions that facilitate mutual understanding and revealing the existing economic inequality, racial discrimination, and cultural exploitation that pose challenges to cosmopolitanism. In Chapter Three, I turn to Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* and investigate how the novel represents the new globalised cosmopolitan Islam in the context of late twentieth and early twenty-first-century Pakistani migration to Britain. *Maps for Lost Lovers* demonstrates that Islam should be seen as a 'globalised Islam' – to use Oliver Roy's term – which is evolving in the context of glocalisation and globalisation.⁸ In the novel, the Muslims in the diasporic Pakistani community start to re-evaluate and gradually adapt their Islamic tradition and culture to the new context. Imagining different manifestations of globalised Islam (westernised, conservative, or Sufi-influenced), *Maps for Lost Lovers* urges a keen attentiveness to the emergence of cosmopolitan Islam in the context of globalisation. The last chapter investigates the prospect of digital cosmopolitanism as represented in Hari Kunzru's *Transmission*. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri note in *Empire*, we have now entered an age of 'informatization', as the handling and exchange of information become essential to social and economic activities.⁹ *Transmission* foregrounds the continued and substantial inequality between exploited digital workers and the elites who own the means of realising the value of information. But the novel also raises the hope for digital cosmopolitanism by revealing the subversive

⁸ Oliver Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), ix.

⁹ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, (London: Harvard University Press, 2000).

power of digital workers (who are self-programmed and ‘learn how to learn’) and by representing a global crisis caused by the spread of computer viruses that makes international cooperation more urgent than before. *Transmission* encourages us to reflect on ‘global risk society’ as people are increasingly reliant on new technologies, and it foregrounds the importance of cosmopolitan consciousness in an age of informatisation, linking the concerns in the present with those of an uncertain posthuman future.

Defining Cosmopolitanism: Classical and Contemporary Theories of Cosmopolitanism

The term ‘cosmopolitanism’ derives from the ancient Greek word ‘*kosmopolites*’, with *kosmo* referring to the ‘world’ and *polites* to ‘citizen’. As a concept, ‘cosmopolitanism’ is, at its most basic, characterised by a keen consciousness of the seemingly unrelated others beyond one’s immediate milieu and by an extended commitment not only to regional or national communities but also to the world. As early as the fifth century BC, the Greek Cynic philosopher Diogenes declared ‘I am the citizen of the world’ when he was asked where he came from.¹⁰ Diogenes refused to be simply defined by his birthplace and instead considered citizenship on a larger scale than had hitherto been imagined. Inheriting this line of thought, the Stoics developed the idea of world citizenship, arguing that we all dwell in two communities: the local community of our birth and the community of human argument and aspiration that is ‘truly great and truly common, in which we look neither to this corner nor to that, but measure the boundaries of our nation by the sun’.¹¹ By acknowledging the measurement made only by the sun, the Stoics suggest that all human beings are bound by a transcendent and universal force, which is the

¹⁰ See in Martha Nussbaum, ‘Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism’, *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 5.1 (1997), 1-25.

¹¹ Seneca, *De Otio*, 4.1, trans. as in A. A. Long and D. Sedley, eds, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 431.

foundation of one ‘truly great’ and ‘truly common’ community more worthy than, and necessarily distinct from, local and national ones. This Greek notion of universal cosmopolitanism was carried on in Enlightenment times when men were deemed to be rational beings and thus assumed to uphold a rationalistic worldview; since they possessed a common rationality, men were thought to have the potential to establish a global community. Discussing how to maintain true and worldwide peace, Immanuel Kant in his essay ‘Perpetual Peace’ advocated the creation of a ‘cosmopolitan law’ that is based on republican principles and applicable to all.¹² With such a law, Kant argued, ‘the peoples of the earth have thus entered in varying degrees into a universal community, and it has developed to the point where a violation of laws in one part of the world is felt everywhere’.¹³ From Greek philosophers to Enlightenment thinkers such as Kant, extending ethical commitments from the nation to the world – a move which is at the core of cosmopolitanism – relied on the virtue of a common humanity and the endorsement of universal good. In contemporary times, this line of thought has been carried on by thinkers like Martha Nussbaum. For Nussbaum, one’s ethical concern for other people resembles a set of concentric circles, with family and friends being in the inner circles and distant others in the outer circles. Nussbaum believes that one’s ethical commitment to distant others does not conflict with that to family or friends; just as we need to be attentive to the inner circles, so the outer ones should be equally important. As Nussbaum puts it, ‘we should work to make all human beings part of our community of dialogue and concern, base our political deliberations on that interlocking commonality, and give the circle that defines our humanity special attention and respect’.¹⁴

However, the notion of universal cosmopolitanism has been increasingly challenged by contemporary critics. For a start, as Bruce Robbins remarks, ‘common

¹² Immanuel Kant, ‘Perpetual Peace, A Philosophical Essay’, in *Kant: Political Writings*, ed. by Hans Reiss, translated by H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, second enlarged edition 1991).

¹³ Kant, ‘Perpetual Peace, A Philosophical Essay’, pp. 107-8.

¹⁴ Martha Nussbaum, ‘Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism’, *Boston Review*, 19.5 (1994), 1-12 (p. 4).

humanity is too weak a force to generate sufficient solidarity'.¹⁵ Solidarity has to be forged in specific social and cultural environments, whereas using common humanity as a binding force – something which cannot be experienced concretely and is difficult to comprehend, especially for ordinary people – is hardly sufficient to generate meaningful relationships across borders. Furthermore, Kwame Appiah correctly points out that the real challenge to cosmopolitanism 'isn't the belief that other people don't matter at all; it is the belief that they don't matter very much'.¹⁶ The concept of universal cosmopolitanism still lays its foundation on the binary opposition between one's specific obligations and universal ones. Due to the belief in an 'either-or' logic, a person's commitment to the world is normally seen as secondary to his/her concerns for local or national communities. Yet the most serious problem is that, with their ambitious goal of 'benefiting the world', those who advocate universal cosmopolitanism risk neglecting the specificity of local circumstances and may end up following the old path of imperialism (being arbitrary, exploitative, and violent). As David Harvey warns, 'all universalizing projects run into serious problems as they encounter the specific circumstances of their application. Noble phrases and ideals crumble into shoddy excuses, special pleadings, misunderstandings, and, more often than not, violent confrontations and recriminations'.¹⁷ In the past, establishing one grand human community was used as an excuse for brutal exploitations of regional resources and the suppression of indigenous populations. At the current time, cosmopolitanism must no longer be a high-sounding universal project but rather carefully reconsider local-global dynamics.

In contrast to universal cosmopolitanism, the cosmopolitanism examined in this thesis is a new 'rooted' cosmopolitanism that arises from the current context of globalisation: it places an equal emphasis on the global and the local, foregrounding both a set of values to be commonly accepted and the distinctiveness of the locality

¹⁵ Robbins, 'Introduction Part I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism', p. 4.

¹⁶ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, (New York: Norton, 2006), p. 153.

¹⁷ David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 8.

from which a global vision is born. In an age of globalisation, the world is no longer a distant place only to be conjured up in one's mind, but rather somewhere that is increasingly blended and connected with the locality where we are all situated. Singling out two key emerging forces – electronic media and mass migration – Arjun Appadurai states that there is no identifiable or rigid dichotomy between the centre and the periphery in the new global order: globalisation induces a 'complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing centre-periphery models'.¹⁸ Cosmopolitanism is embedded within the 'complex, overlapping, disjunctive order' that Appadurai identifies. The boundaries between the nation and the world are blurred during daily cross-cultural interactions and begin to be eroded by increasingly accessible global events witnessed via new media. In consequence, people's concerns for global others are very likely to overlap, rather than conflict with, their concerns for those of the same nationality. No longer a free-floating idea, cosmopolitanism is now rooted in local circumstances. As Robbins notes, cosmopolitanism is the 'habits of thought and feeling that have already shaped and been shaped by particular collectivities, that are socially and geographically situated, hence both limited and empowered'.¹⁹ Importantly, this new cosmopolitanism is characterised by an endorsement of 'partial' and 'flexible' commitments to the local and the global: locality continues to assert itself as important and thus it serves to counteract the assimilative effects of globalisation. As Appiah states, a cosmopolitan person does not endorse 'the nationalist who abandons all foreigners', and neither does he identify with 'the hard-core cosmopolitan who regards her friends and fellow citizens with icy impartiality'.²⁰ The new cosmopolitanism requires that people be partially committed to the nation and the world, and that they take pleasure in the presence of other places and cultures while enjoying a home of their own with its cultural particularities.

¹⁸ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota, 1996), p. 32.

¹⁹ Robbins, 'Introduction Part I: Actual Existing Cosmopolitanism', p. 2.

²⁰ Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, p. xvii.

This new cosmopolitanism – both rooted in concrete socio-political circumstances and foregrounding the interplay between the local and the global – is particularly suitable to be examined through literature and literary analysis. In my study of contemporary British fiction, I concur with Pnina Werbner in noting that cosmopolitanism is, in essence, an aspirational outlook and a mode of practice. It is about ‘reaching out across cultural differences through dialogue, aesthetic enjoyment, and respect; ... living together with differences’; it is also about ‘the cosmopolitan right to abode and hospitality in strange lands and, alongside that, the urgent need to devise ways of living together in peace in the international community’.²¹ This definition highlights two prominent features of contemporary cosmopolitanism that I am particularly attentive to in this thesis. First is the close connection between cosmopolitanism and the current globalised context. Contemporary cosmopolitanism stems from the complex network of global interconnection and interdependence; it is associated with the urgent need to solve conflicting loyalties between the nation and the contemporary world. The second feature of cosmopolitanism is its partiality and flexibility. Cosmopolitanism foregrounds the ability to break free from the seemingly fixed attachments to a particular community; it is about reaching out to different people and distinct cultures with an open mind through dialogue, aesthetic enjoyment, and mutual respect. Cosmopolitanism, therefore, does not imply detachment but rather the proliferation of attachments: as Robbins states, it is ‘a reality of (re)attachment, multiple attachments, or attachment at a distance’.²²

The fictions addressed in this thesis are particularly helpful when it comes to examining this new type of cosmopolitanism. Situating readers in a position of overt self-awareness vis-a-vis the protagonists, these fictions dramatise the nuances of daily life in the context of globalisation, exposing the slight changes that take place in the local space and helping us to detect traces of cosmopolitanism that pass largely unrecognised. They inform our understanding of contemporary cosmopolitanism. This

²¹ Pnina Werbner, *Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism: Rooted, Feminist and Vernacular Perspectives*, (London: Routledge, 2020), p. 2.

²² Robbins, ‘Introduction Part I: Actual Existing Cosmopolitanism’, p. 2.

is not only because they take as their subject a series of newly emerging global issues but also because of the narrative techniques they employ. Some of the works have the features of surrealism, while others use narrative techniques such as montage and flashback. In all cases, however, the fictions bring the notion of home and globe together in an allegorical way; they foreground the free joining of entities in the interstices of culture, leading to a spatiotemporal circulation of responsibilities between the past, present, and future.

One aim of this thesis is to examine how the selected fictions represent the birth of latent and unconscious cosmopolitanism. In other words, the thesis focuses on the cosmopolitan transition that occurs naturally and effortlessly in a globalised context. As Ulrich Beck notes, we are now experiencing the ‘cosmopolitanization of reality’: it is a latent and unconscious cosmopolitanism, meaning ‘internal globalization, globalization from *within* the national societies’.²³ In a sense, our connection with global others has been established naturally and effortlessly as we join the global market and become the bearers of diverse images and messages that ‘cross frontiers and penetrate otherwise separate experiential spaces’.²⁴ The condition of globalisation enables us to cross borders because we have been provided with a platform where we may subversively perform our self-identities or make flexible connections with global others through everyday interactions. Noting the difficulties involved in pinning down the location of culture, Homi Bhabha argues that ‘it is the trope of our times to locate the question of culture in the realm of *beyond*’; he further states that ‘the “middle passage” of contemporary culture ... is a process of displacement and disjunction that does not totalize experience’.²⁵ We are now situated in a liminal space that is neither here nor there, and one that is also both here and there; as Bhabha suggests, the in-between position enables us to subversively perform our identities by implementing a series of strategies such as mimicry, parody, and repetition. I concur with Gerard

²³ Ulrich Beck, ‘The Cosmopolitan Society and its Enemies’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 19.1-2 (2002), 17- 44 (p. 134).

²⁴ Beck, ‘Cosmopolitical Realism: On the Distinction Between Cosmopolitanism in Philosophy and the Social Sciences’, *Global Networks*, 4.2 (2004), 131-156 (p. 151).

²⁵ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 1.

Delanty in holding that cosmopolitanism ‘is an approach that shifts the emphasis to internal developmental processes within the social world rather than seeing globalization as the primary mechanism’.²⁶ Literary approaches to cosmopolitanism help us to examine what Delanty terms ‘internal developmental processes’ in society: literary works facilitate us to observe latent forms of cosmopolitanism both through detailed portrayals of characters and through nuanced representations of social interactions.

However, we need to avoid the temptation of being satisfied with what Craig Calhoun terms ‘soft cosmopolitanism’ – a cosmopolitanism that only stays at the superficial level and requires little consciousness or strenuous effort. We must account for the existing social and political obstacles that add complexity to the concept and examine both the challenges to and possibilities for cosmopolitanism. Warning of the temptations of ‘soft cosmopolitanism’, Calhoun states that ‘food, tourism, music, literature, and clothes are all easy faces of cosmopolitanism’.²⁷ Although not all the elements listed by Calhoun necessarily belong to easy and soft cosmopolitanism, he rightly reminds us that envisioning cosmopolitanism is not effortless even in the context of globalisation. Cosmopolitanism faces many difficulties and challenges, and it requires a strenuous process of acquisition especially when we consider the continued exploitation, inequality, and social and cultural division in the current globalised world. Although Bhabha proposes that self-identity can be subversively ‘performed’, Pheng Cheah reminds us that ‘the social is not ... exhausted by its *symbolic dimensions*’: the extent to which individuals’ subversive performances can effectively counter existing sociopolitical issues such as racial discrimination and economic exploitation remains questionable.²⁸ Cosmopolitanism is an even more

²⁶ Gerard Delanty, ‘The Cosmopolitan Imagination: Critical Cosmopolitanism and Social Theory’, *The British Journal of Sociology*, 57.1 (2006), 25-47 (p. 27).

²⁷ Craig J Calhoun, ‘The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travelers: Toward a Critique of Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism’, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 101.4 (2002), 869-897 (p. 889).

²⁸ Pheng Cheah, ‘Given Culture: Rethinking Cosmopolitical Freedom in Transnationalism’, *Cultural Politics*, 14 (1998), 290-328 (p. 299).

challenging idea for underprivileged people such as migrant labourers and racial and cultural minorities. As Cheah notes, popular nationalism at the periphery of society might be a 'necessary step towards socialist cosmopolitanism because we live in an uneven capitalist world system'.²⁹ Those who remain at the margins of society may well seek to free themselves from their inferior status before being motivated to open up to a wider global community. In this light, how fictions represent both the challenges to and possibilities for cosmopolitanism is one main focus of this thesis. As Berthold Schoene states, representations of the cosmopolitan must convey a 'synchronicity of the incongruous multifarious and seemingly disconnected at the same time as it does its best to capture the streaming flow of a newly emergent contemporaneity.'³⁰ The fictions discussed in this thesis do not present an easily attainable cosmopolitan vision but demonstrate the conflicting forces and constant struggles on the journey to cosmopolitanism. Anti-cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitanism are both represented in the texts, which foregrounds the obstacles that must be accounted for in envisioning genuine hospitality and openness to global others.

The thesis also investigates whether a stable and long-lasting cosmopolitanism evolves from occasional friendly gestures to conscious and consistent performances of cross-border hospitality. As Delanty states, 'cosmopolitanism must be seen as one of the major expressions of the tendency in modernity towards self-problematization'.³¹ Ultimately, cosmopolitanism requires a change of mindset through constant self-confrontation and self-problematisation; it necessitates the generation of a new type of consciousness, through which people are willing to descend from the centralised position and interact with global others in an intersubjective manner. This new type of consciousness is to be cultivated through one's constant reflection on the modern

²⁹ Cheah, 'Introduction Part II: The Cosmopolitical-Today', in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*, ed. by Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp. 20-41 (p. 33).

³⁰ Berthold Schoene, *Cosmopolitan Novel*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 14.

³¹ Delanty, 'The Cosmopolitan Imagination', p. 35.

situation: Beck refers to ‘reflective’ globalisation, stating that ‘what is new is not forced mixing but awareness of it, its self-conscious political affirmation, its reflection and recognition before a global public’.³² Through this study of contemporary British fiction, I seek to explore the extent to which discrete cosmopolitan dispositions and actions begin to crystallize into a permanent form of reflective cosmopolitanism – whether it is through the characters’ repeated hospitable gestures towards global others or an epiphany attained after overcoming all the obstacles throughout the journey. In this thesis, I mainly focus on the ethical transition among individuals rather than, for instance, the change of political schemes or the enforcement of new laws at an institutional level. Yet my literary study of the reflective cosmopolitanism that emerges among ordinary people may pave the way for further research on institutionalised cosmopolitanism, which is an equally important topic, especially in sociological and political studies. Diverse approaches – whether literary or socio-political – complement each other, and they together inform our understanding of the concept of cosmopolitanism in the context of globalisation.

This thesis switches attention away from elites – artists, intellectuals, and scholars who were once seen as the only possible cosmopolitans – to the ordinary and even less privileged groups of people, such as migrant workers or racial and cultural minorities, who make their own unique contributions to contemporary cosmopolitanism. Distinguishing between cosmopolitans, locals, and transnationals, Ulf Hannerz argues that among all the people who have transnational experiences, some ‘would seem more cosmopolitan than others, and others again hardly cosmopolitan at all’.³³ He singles out two basic requirements for a potentially cosmopolitan person: one is orientation, which is an ‘intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness towards divergent cultural experiences’, the other is competence, ‘a personal ability to make one’s way into other cultures’.³⁴ According to these criteria,

³² Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), p. 21.

³³ Ulf Hannerz, ‘Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture’, *Theory Culture Society*, 7 (1990), 237-51 (p. 238).

³⁴ Hannerz, ‘Cosmopolitans’, p. 239.

Hannerz believes that only the elites or those with privileged backgrounds have the chance to become cosmopolitan. However, this clear-cut distinction between ‘cosmopolitan elites’ and ‘non-cosmopolitan others’ is no longer viable in the current globalised context. As Appadurai notes, the general public has now begun to ‘move and drag their imagination for new ways of living’; Appadurai further argues that ‘we need to look closely at the variety of what has emerged as *diasporic public spheres*’, calling for us to pay attention to the agency emerging at the margins of society.³⁵ Reflecting on the status of companion servants, guides, and migrant labourers, James Clifford stresses that cultures at the margin have always been ‘travelling’, and it is in the endless process of transformation, adaption, and incorporation that cosmopolitanism takes shape. As Clifford states, ‘cultures of displacement and transplantation are inseparable from specific, often violent, histories of economic, political, and cultural interaction, histories that generate what might be called discrepant cosmopolitanism.’³⁶ No longer viewing privileged people as the only possible cosmopolitans, this thesis examines literary representations of ordinary and even dispossessed people in society. For example, Chapter Two examines how Haitian immigrants are represented in *On Beauty*, and Chapter Three explores marginalised Muslims in the Pakistani diaspora in *Maps for Lost Lovers*. By focusing on the ordinary people and examining how they contribute to cosmopolitanism, I not only aim to fill a void in the study of cosmopolitanism (which used to be mainly elite-based) but also seek to explore the complexity of the concept – that is, to assess the extent to which cosmopolitanism can be accepted by a wide public and to investigate what conflicts and struggles are involved in a mass-based cosmopolitanism.

³⁵ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, pp. 4-21.

³⁶ James Clifford, ‘Traveling Cultures’, in *Cultural Studies*, ed. by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula A. Treichler, and Linda Baughman (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 96-116 (p. 108).

Debating New Cosmopolitanism: Challenges and Opportunities in the Context of Globalisation

The year 1989 was a watershed in the emergence of the new cosmopolitanism. The fall of the Berlin Wall signalled the end of the Cold War, yet with hindsight, that transitional period, which seemed to gesture towards a new cosmopolitan future, was not without its problems. Indeed, the year 1989 assumes an important position in our configuration of a new cosmopolitanism. The physical dismantling of the Berlin Wall offered a compelling image of breaking down the boundaries maintained by force and of the re-establishment of suppressed forms of human contact. As Robert Fine notes, numerous intellectual and political movements, which were themselves international, emerged after 1989, and nearly all of them have human rights, global governance, international law, or peaceful relations between states as their central missions.³⁷ Highlighting the intimate connection between the movements in 1989 and the birth of new cosmopolitanism, Fine argues that when we speak today of the ‘new cosmopolitanism’, it is the movements of 1989 that we have in mind, since ‘it was only after 1989, at the close of the Cold War, that a new configuration of cosmopolitan practice seems to change every character of the epoch’.³⁸ However, people’s celebration of new cosmopolitanism at that time was based on dangerous complacency over the triumph of the West. After 1989, people tended to assume that the end of the Cold War was equivalent to ‘the end of history’ in Francis Fukuyama’s words, and that the collapse of the Soviet Union meant an unabashed victory for economic and political liberalism in the West.³⁹ For example, Thomas Friedman writes in his book *The World is Flat*, ‘the fall of the Berlin Wall on 11/9/89 unleashed forces that ultimately liberated all the captive peoples of the Soviet Empire’ – the event gestured towards a world of ‘democratic, consensual, free-market-oriented

³⁷ Robert Fine, *Cosmopolitanism*, (New York: Routledge, 2007).

³⁸ Robert, Fine, ‘Taking the ‘ism’ out of Cosmopolitanism: An Essay in Reconstruction’, *European Journal of Social Theory*, 6.4 (2003), 451-470 (p. 456).

³⁹ Francis Fukuyama, ‘The End of History?’, *The National Interest*, 16 (1989), 3-18.

governance’.⁴⁰ The idea that the world is ‘flat’ implies that an overwhelming consensus across the world is to be achieved as neo-liberal thought takes over; in this light, new cosmopolitanism is not very different from the old universal cosmopolitanism, in which the specificity of the locality is overlooked and disregarded. Ishiguro’s *The Unconsoled* challenges the overoptimistic view of new cosmopolitanism in its representation of the post-1989 East-Central European town. The novel foregrounds people’s confusion about being incorporated into the western system; nostalgia for a communist past is intertwined with a hesitant embrace of a neo-liberal future – a future that is not as promising as it appears to be. In *The Unconsoled*, the dynamics in the East-Central European town expose the hidden problem of new cosmopolitanism: while the year 1989 fundamentally changed the world and possibly gestured towards the birth of new cosmopolitanism, it is important to be cautious about the rosy promises and remain alert to both the challenges and possibilities of the coming new age.

The event that radically disrupted the widespread optimism for new, post-1989 cosmopolitanism was the attack on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001. Almost with the same strong emotion with which he praises the arriving new age, Friedman laments the bleak future of cosmopolitanism after the tragedy on September 11. As Friedman comments, while 1989 saw the tearing down of an old Berlin Wall, the 9/11 incident forever closed the window to the world and put up ‘new visible and concrete walls among people at a time when we thought 11/9 had erased them for good’.⁴¹ People’s passionate belief in ‘the end of history’ after 1989 was transformed into a painful realisation that history has not ended in peace. Schoene specifically underlines how the 9/11 incident triggered our re-interpretation of the new cosmopolitanism: as he argues, since then, cosmopolitanism has ‘lost its carefree innocence in response to a paroxysm of atrocious violence followed on its heel by a

⁴⁰ Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat: The Globalized World in the Twenty-First Century*, (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 52.

⁴¹ Friedman, *The World is Flat*, p. 543.

period of oppressive worldwide duress'.⁴² Schoene here implies that cosmopolitanism before 9/11 was characterised by 'carefree innocence', but such a neat periodisation is oversimplified. As I have discussed above, cosmopolitanism even before 9/11 was not characterised by carefree innocence in Schoene's words. The new cosmopolitanism after the Cold War carried a neoliberal ideology into new contexts for global markets, and it even brought back an old universal cosmopolitanism that risked being exploitative and condescending. If anything, 9/11 did not mark an abrupt change in the course of history, but only brought to the surface previously hidden and overlooked problems since 1989 and warned us to carefully re-examine both the challenges and opportunities that come alongside our globalised new age. Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled* serves to foreground the nuances of cosmopolitanism in the transitional period and warns us of the overoptimistic view of cosmopolitanism before the tragedy of 9/11. Likewise, the other fictions considered in this thesis that were written after 9/11 offer careful reflections on other aspects of the current globalised situation. Together they contribute to a more comprehensive and critical understanding of the cosmopolitanism of our age.

Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* presents an opportunity to investigate the connections between cosmopolitanism and the frequent cross-border encounters and interactions that take place in the context of glocal cohabitation. As Robertson notes, we are now living in an increasingly 'glocalised' world, where the local and global 'make a blend' and are closely interconnected.⁴³ Under the trend of mass migration, the production of locality is growingly influenced by extraterritorial forces; as a result, the boundaries between the local and the global are eroded as people from diverse backgrounds dwell in the same glocal space. One major effect of glocalisation, as noted by Zygmunt Bauman, is that people are less likely to be distinguished and judged by their national origins than by their personal traits and characteristics. As Bauman writes, 'some of them are confronted as friends, some others as enemies, but *personal* friends or

⁴² Schoene, *Cosmopolitan Novel*, p. 8.

⁴³ Roland Robertson, 'Glocalization', *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (2018), 1-8.

enemies rather than anonymous and interchangeable, stereotyped specimens of an abstract category'.⁴⁴ The fact that people now see each other as 'individuals' helps to overcome national and cultural stereotypes because it renders the category of the nation no longer as important as personal characteristics. In the context of glocalisation, frequent cross-border encounters, as well as subsequent cultural exchanges, are believed to give birth to cosmopolitanism. However, there are different opinions on this subject. For instance, Andrew Dobson correctly points out that 'what cosmopolitanism requires is a "nearness" to vulnerable, suffering, disadvantaged others'.⁴⁵ It remains unclear whether people from diverse backgrounds are willing to establish 'contact' with each other, despite the fact that they now 'live' in the same glocal space. Moreover, it remains uncertain whether different types of blockage and segregation have been removed or whether they still exist and prevent cross-border interactions. In my thesis, Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*, for example, shows that the Haitian immigrants who live in the multicultural college town are largely isolated from other native residents; they tend to be treated as inferior 'others' and still suffer from racial discrimination and economic exploitation. *On Beauty* foregrounds the complexity of glocalised cosmopolitanism: it demonstrates that the phenomenon of people from diverse backgrounds living in the same glocal space does not necessarily lead to free cross-border encounters or interactions.

If contemporary cosmopolitanism is both rooted and mass-based, and it concerns not only elites but also underprivileged and disempowered people, then the long-standing debates over nationalism and cosmopolitanism become even more intense. Timothy Brennan argues that the 'locality of cosmopolitanism' is still essentially the West: it fails to 'link that nexus itself to the non-Western world, which any cosmopolitanism should properly foreground'.⁴⁶ It is mistaken to assume that

⁴⁴ Zygmunt Bauman, 'Glocalization and Hybridity', *Glocalism: Journal of Culture, Politics and Innovation*, (2013), 1-5 (p. 3).

⁴⁵ Andrew Dobson, 'Thick Cosmopolitanism', *Political Studies*, 54.1 (2006), 165-184 (p. 171).

⁴⁶ Timothy Brennan, 'Cosmo-Theory', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 100.3 (2001), 659-91 (p. 674).

everyone has access to travel or feels like exploring a new culture and enjoying the status of being in the world. Refugees or immigrant workers from the Third World, for example, are often compelled to leave their homeland and struggle to be incorporated into new environments. Consequently, these people usually do not have a sense of belonging in the host country that they migrate to and dwell in. Even if they do lay claim to it, it is unclear, as Cheah argues, whether their vague feeling of ‘belonging to the world’ is ‘analytically distinguished from long-distance, absentee national feeling’.⁴⁷ While the new cosmopolitanism seeks to reconcile the disparities between people’s affiliation to the nation and the world by emphasising partial and flexible attachments to both, Cheah argues that the top priority for the marginalised and usually dispossessed immigrants is to reassert their national-cultural identity, and cosmopolitanism only, at best, comes second. As Cheah notes, the reassertions of national-cultural identity are not necessarily imposed from above but are rather a voluntary action from below ‘because they express the needs of disadvantaged social groups in changing economic conditions’.⁴⁸ In other words, nationalism is a necessary defence mechanism against the current hostile environment. It protects people from historical forms of tyranny (the development of the nation-state is congruous with moving away from despotic rules), and it also protects them from corporate domination and the exploitation of the free global market. In this regard, nationalism should be a better policy than cosmopolitanism in serving the interests of underprivileged and disempowered people, who may find that their loyalty and commitment to the nation are not compatible with that to the world.

The tension between the two possible paths – one leading to nationalism and the other to cosmopolitanism – also manifests itself when it comes to discussing how culture, which is not fixed or unchangeable, evolves in diasporic communities. Appiah underlines that culture does not exist in an a priori state but is rather produced and developed in particular social contexts. As Appiah notes, we should talk less about culture, which implies that there is an authentic existence called ‘culture,’ than

⁴⁷ Cheah, ‘Introduction Part II: The Cosmopolitical-Today’, p. 37.

⁴⁸ Cheah, ‘Given Culture’, p. 311.

culturalism, a term that highlights ‘the process of naturalizing a subset of differences that have been mobilized to articulate group identity’.⁴⁹ The acknowledgement that culture is not natural but nurtured implies that culture evolves in particular social contexts; it further legitimises the assumption that in an age of globalisation, a cosmopolitan culture is likely to emerge within diasporic communities, where the boundary between the local and the global is blurred. Noting the dynamics in diaspora, James Clifford states that ‘whatever their ideologies of purity, diasporic cultural forms can never, in practice, be exclusively nationalist’.⁵⁰ In a diaspora, residents preserve the language, customs and cultural traditions from their home country, but they also begin to incorporate new elements through their everyday experience in the host country, and this may give rise to a cosmopolitan culture. In my thesis, Aslam’s *Maps for Lost Lovers* represents the nuanced changes to Islamic religion and culture within the diasporic Pakistani community. The novel illustrates how the Muslims’ relation to Islam is heavily influenced by the trend of globalisation, westernisation, and the status of living as a minority, and this potentially paves the way for a form of cosmopolitan Islam fitted to a globalised world. However, although culture is not an a priori thing but rather prone to change, it remains questionable whether the promised transformation in diaspora from nation-oriented to cosmopolitan really takes place. Some cultural differences that mark off one group from another are not just superficial – they are deeply rooted in concrete traditions, social practices, and collective memories. Therefore, as Werbner points out, what is equally marked is ‘the extent to which [people] are willing to mobilise to defend and protect these domains of public performance when and if they are threatened “externally”’.⁵¹ As *Maps for Lost Lovers* shows, globalised Islam is not equivalent to cosmopolitan Islam. In the novel, even organisations who have conducted campaigns of violence in the name of Islam have

⁴⁹ Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, p. 15.

⁵⁰ James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 251.

⁵¹ Pnina Werbner, ‘The Translocation of Culture: “Community Cohesion” and the Force of Multiculturalism in History’, *The Sociological Review*, 53.4 (2005), 745-768 (p. 759).

made use of globalised networks, new media, and advanced technology, but these cannot be understood as ‘cosmopolitan’ in any meaningful way. Again, whether a globalised culture in diasporic spheres will evolve into a cosmopolitan culture is uncertain. People in diasporas may consciously underline and exaggerate cultural differences, and they do not necessarily choose a cosmopolitan stance and instead develop a confrontational culture.

Finally, the prospect of contemporary cosmopolitanism must be examined in the current context of ‘informatisation’, where mass media and new technology play a central role in social life and their advance enables us to live in a globally-connected network society. As Hardt and Negri note in *Empire*, we have now entered an age of ‘post-modernisation’, or ‘informatisation’, which is in general characterised by ‘the central role played by knowledge, information, affect, and communication.’⁵² With the advance of new media and technology, people are less concerned about location and distance when they seek to connect with others, and they are able to overcome geographical or sociopolitical barriers more easily than before. For instance, Manuel Castells notes that the popularity of the internet has led to the establishment of “virtual communities” and given rise to a new form of sociability: people meet new friends at a distance and share values and interests online; ties of support and friendship are created in a virtual world, and these ties can also be extended into real life.⁵³ However, not all conditions in an age of informatisation are favourable to the cosmopolitan prospect. Although Castells is fairly positive about the new age of informatisation, he also acknowledges the existence of a wide ‘digital divide’ between the affluent and the marginalised poor. Not everyone has access to new media and advanced technology, and not everyone accesses and employs them in the same way. Furthermore, Hardt and Negri correctly point out that the coming age of information does not mean an end to exploitation. For example, the newly emerged ‘immaterial labourers’ – who create immaterial products such as knowledge and information –

⁵² Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, p. 285.

⁵³ Manuel Castells, *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

may suffer even more brutal exploitation in companies and turn out to be the most vulnerable in times of financial crisis.⁵⁴ Centring around an Indian IT worker who migrates to the United States, Kunzru's *Transmission* demonstrates the complexity in the age of informatisation and warns us against being overly optimistic about the prospect of digital cosmopolitanism. The novel shows that although people may develop wider connections in a virtual world, they still need to consider the constraints of socio-economic factors when envisioning a cosmopolitan future. A series of factors in the age of informatisation need careful reconsideration, such as the continued exploitation of immaterial labourers, the privatised information by elites, or the use of enhanced surveillance technology.

Reviewing Literary Cosmopolitanism

The relationship between globalisation and cosmopolitanism can be examined through literary studies, as contemporary fiction serves to imagine not only the nation but the world. In the past, it was believed that fiction played an important role in strengthening national unity. Benedict Anderson views the nation as a cultural artefact, defining it as 'an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign'.⁵⁵ According to Anderson, people from the same country may not know each other or may never have met in person, but they are bound together by the collective 'imagination' of belonging to the same national community, and that imagination is based on the individual's experience of reading novels and newspapers or seeing symbols such as cenotaphs, maps, and flags.⁵⁶ In particular, Anderson underlines three aspects regarding fiction and fiction reading that contribute to an imagined national community: firstly, fiction writers often adopt an omniscient point of view when they narrate the story, and this gives a sense of unity; secondly, the

⁵⁴ Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 108.

⁵⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 2006), p. 6.

⁵⁶ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

nation is often a prominent theme in fiction; thirdly, fiction readers are normally located within the national sphere.⁵⁷ However, the elements identified by Anderson are no longer necessarily features of contemporary fiction because fiction is increasingly influenced by, and responsive to, the current condition of globalisation. Responding to Anderson's view, Rita Barnard in her 'Fictions of the Global' points out several new features of contemporary fiction and fiction reading. As Barnard notes, contemporary writers do not exclusively use an omniscient mode of narration; using Geoff Ryman's fiction 253 as an example, Barnard points out that in contemporary fiction, seemingly unrelated stories and characters are juxtaposed, and hidden connections are eventually revealed.⁵⁸ The thematic choices and target readers of contemporary fiction also exceed the national sphere: writers may shift attention to the world and respond to new global issues; with the development of global markets, fictions produced in one nation also attract readers across the world.⁵⁹ If in the past fiction created a sense of unity within the nation-state, then the fiction of our age may challenge the nation as an imagined community and help in the development of cosmopolitan consciousness.

Critics have sought to investigate the connection between modern and contemporary literature and cosmopolitanism. According to Alan McCluskey, literary studies of cosmopolitanism roughly fall into two categories: one involves critics of an 'aesthetic' orientation who appreciate 'individual creative expression and cultural eclecticism', while the other centres around the 'sociopolitical' by foregrounding the relationship between ethics and politics.⁶⁰ Rebecca Walkowitz adopts the aesthetically orientated approach to cosmopolitanism. In her work *Cosmopolitan Style*, Walkowitz focuses on the narrative styles of modern and contemporary fiction and shows how these styles generate a cosmopolitan feeling. The cosmopolitan styles she identifies include Joseph Conrad's naturalness, James Joyce's triviality, Virginia Woolf's

⁵⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

⁵⁸ Rita Barnard, 'Fictions of the Global', *Novel*, 42.2 (2009), 207-215 (pp. 208-210).

⁵⁹ Barnard, 'Fictions of the Global', 207-215 (pp. 212-213).

⁶⁰ Alan McCluskey, *Materiality and the Modern Cosmopolitan Novel*, (New York: Springer, 2015), p. 6.

evasiveness, Kazuro Ishiguro's treason, Salman Rushdie's mix-up, and W. G. Sebald's vertigo.⁶¹ In contrast, critics who adopt sociopolitical approaches pay greater attention to the intersections between the realm of the imagination and social and political contexts. In *Cosmopolitan Novel*, Berthold Schoene states that a disappointing number of theorists and literary scholars who employ cosmopolitan theories in their work display a 'strikingly naïve lack of political purpose [... and] commitment'.⁶² In his study of modern and contemporary British novels, Schoene highlights the complexity of the current globalised context and reinforces that the new cosmopolitanism is rooted in concrete socio-cultural circumstances. In this thesis, I mainly adopt the sociopolitical approach, but it is important to note that the two approaches cannot be easily separated from each other. While I pay attention to the narrative techniques employed in my chosen texts, my main focus is on the writers' thematic explorations of the newly emergent global concerns, and I seek to connect the study of literary cosmopolitanism with that of, for instance, class inequalities and the significant material (economic) disparities that exist within and between world societies.

My thesis is indebted to Katherine Stanton's research on ethics, politics and global changes in cosmopolitan fiction. Stanton examines the connection between ethics and politics by considering works by Kazuo Ishiguro, Jamaica Kincaid, JM Coetzee, and Michael Ondaatje.⁶³ Concentrating on situations of socio-political change, turmoil, and dissatisfaction, she examines how fiction represents the ethical transition to cosmopolitanism, seeking to find 'the ethical duties of the outsider, the limits and measure of justice, the possibility for action in a global field, and the impediments to social redistribution' in the context of globalisation.⁶⁴

Both Fiona McCulloch and Berthold Schoene focus on cosmopolitanism in

⁶¹ Rebecca Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism beyond the Nation*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

⁶² Schoene, *Cosmopolitan Novel*, p. 2.

⁶³ Katherine Stanton, *Cosmopolitan Fictions: Ethics, Politics, and Global Change in the Works of Kazuo Ishiguro, Michael Ondaatje, Jamaica Kincaid, and JM Coetzee*, (London: Routledge, 2013).

⁶⁴ Stanton, *Cosmopolitan Fictions*, p. 3.

contemporary British fiction. McCulloch draws on Rosi Braidotti's theory of 'philosophical nomadism' and argues that 'nomadic fluidity is vital to cosmopolitanism and is in keeping with its deterritorializing resistance'.⁶⁵ She refuses to pin down or fix a definition of cosmopolitanism, since she believes it 'should remain open to dynamic synergies'.⁶⁶ Holding that selfhood exists as a 'fluid flowing of becoming', she examines how fiction represents dynamic modes of identity expression, which take on features of flexibility and multiplicity. While the idea of philosophical nomadism highlighted by McCulloch is insightful, it seems to place greatest emphasis on individual autonomy without showing sufficient concern for social and political constraints. My research is more closely aligned with the approach taken by Schoene. He is attentive to the complexity of the current globalised situation. As he notes, 'it is problematic to conceive of cosmopolitanism as a ready-made panacea for globalisation without addressing also the question of how individuals and communities might actually learn to go about living with everyone else in the world, rather than merely coexisting'.⁶⁷ In his study, Schoene distinguishes between global existence and cosmopolitan consciousness, noting both the challenges to and possibilities for cosmopolitanism in the context of globalisation. I share with Schoene a desire to explore the connection between globalisation and cosmopolitanism as represented in literary works.

Kristian Shaw concentrates on twenty-first-century British and American novels. He notes that the 'twenty-first century has been marked by an unprecedented intensification in globalisation, transnational mobility and technological change'.⁶⁸ Examining works by David Mitchell, Zadie Smith, Teju Cole, Dave Eggers and Hari Kunzru, Shaw explores the literary representation of cosmopolitanism by looking at issues ranging from transnational mobilities, radical technological changes, to the

⁶⁵ Fiona McCulloch, *Cosmopolitanism in Contemporary British Fiction: Imagined Identities*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 4.

⁶⁶ McCulloch, *Cosmopolitanism*, p. 7.

⁶⁷ Schoene, *Cosmopolitan Novel*, p. 2.

⁶⁸ Kristian Shaw, *Cosmopolitanism in Twenty-First Century Fiction*, (New York: Springer, 2017), p. xii.

threats of ecological disaster.

The Originality of the Thesis

What distinguishes this research from others is that it seeks to trace the evolution of the cosmopolitan concept, identifying global concerns in different periods that are related to our past, present and future. In his study of cosmopolitan novels, Schoene puts most emphasis on early forms of cosmopolitanism, dividing his study into three sections (proto cosmopolitanism, a transitional section on David Mitchell, and new cosmopolitanism).⁶⁹ I share with Schoene a desire to explore the connection between globalisation and cosmopolitanism, but I extend his study by focusing on the more recent concerns in a globalised age, such as informatisation and digital cosmopolitanism, and I explore the contemporary role of British writing in envisioning a cosmopolitan future. In the meantime, nevertheless, my research also differs from Shaw's study of cosmopolitanism in twenty-first-century novels that mainly focuses on the contemporary conditions here and now.⁷⁰ My thesis as a whole is structured chronologically and thematically, and it contributes to understanding certain strains of cosmopolitan thinking developed in contemporary British fiction. The novels examined in this thesis start with the birth of the new cosmopolitanism in the transitional period after the 1989 revolution, proceed to explore the current condition of glocal cohabitation and conviviality, and end with an exploration of digital cosmopolitanism that serves to bridge the present and the future.

This research is original also in the sense that it engages with different, as well as interconnected, aspects of cosmopolitanism. In doing so, this thesis offers a comprehensive view of the cosmopolitan concept in the context of globalisation. Although the novels in this thesis are mostly well-known, and some of their cosmopolitan potentials have been examined by other critics, I have sought to

⁶⁹ Schoene, *Cosmopolitan Novel*.

⁷⁰ Kristian Shaw, *Cosmopolitanism in Twenty-First Century Fiction*, (New York: Springer, 2017)

discover new insights on cosmopolitanism in them by either focusing on the authors' less examined work in terms of its cosmopolitan content or approaching the relatively well-known novels from new perspectives. For example, while Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* is mostly read as a campus novel, it is worth examining its contribution to vernacular cosmopolitanism by focusing on the novel's representation of the underprivileged people outside the campus, such as the Haitian immigrants, who play an important role in the story. Here is another example: although critics, such as Peter Childs and James Green, have noted the problems of the information economy in Hari Kunzru's *Transmission*, I seek to find the possibility of digital cosmopolitanism by examining the instability of information capitalist society.⁷¹ Unlike Stanton's research which focuses on major political events or significant historical moments (such as the AIDS epidemic, the end of apartheid, and the human rights movement), I pay greater attention to the internal developmental processes in society and concentrate on relatively less significant events that may promote cosmopolitanism.⁷² Although cosmopolitanism may be stimulated by major social and political events, I contend that it is also embedded in our everyday activities and may take shape gradually and inconspicuously.

Chapter Division

The thesis opens with a study of Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled*. Set in a European town modelled on post-1989 East-Central Europe, *The Unconsoled* captures the turmoil and confusion of that historical moment, and it helps to examine the emergence of new cosmopolitanism after the fall of the Berlin Wall – an event that signalled the re-opening of human contact. As *The Unconsoled* shows, although after

⁷¹ Peter Childs and James Green, *Aesthetics and Ethics in Twenty-First Century British Novels: Zadie Smith, Nadeem Aslam, Hari Kunzru and David Mitchell*, (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).

⁷² Katherine Stanton, *Cosmopolitan Fictions: Ethics, Politics, and Global Change in the Works of Kazuo Ishiguro, Michael Ondaatje, Jamaica Kincaid, and JM Coetzee*, (London: Routledge, 2013).

the collapse of the Soviet Union, people no longer need to follow a strictly standardised and nation-orientated culture, they do not necessarily start to celebrate a new culture of openness and flexibility. In the novel, the residents feel nostalgia for the communist past despite their trauma: for example, the local elites strive to find another heroic figure and recreate national myths. However, I contend that the characters' nostalgia does not necessarily mean that they desire to recreate a totalitarian regime. Rather, as Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille note, 'social memory is selective and contextual': people's memory of a 'good' past reflects their disappointment in, and also active critique of, the unfulfilled neo-liberal promises of a cosmopolitan future.⁷³ Delanty states that Central and Eastern Europe in the aftermath of 1989 has been, in effect, partly absorbed by the West. The West seems to 'have proved its self-proclaimed moral superiority over communism' as the totalitarian state crumbles; East-Central Europe, on the other hand, has been reduced to a disadvantaged periphery of the West.⁷⁴ In *The Unconsoled*, Ryder, a world-renowned pianist from Britain travelling to the European town to give a recital, represents the coming force of neoliberalism from the West. Yet by representing the hierarchical power structure between Ryder and the local people, the novel foregrounds the difficulty in establishing a healthy and intersubjective relationship between the East and the West. *The Unconsoled* also questions the efficiency of global intervention through the portrayal of Ryder, who perceives himself as an 'outsider' to the town and only passively engages in local affairs. Dramatising the East-Central Europeans' mixed feelings towards the West, *The Unconsoled* provides a corrective to the overoptimistic view of new cosmopolitanism in that transitional period.

In the second chapter, I investigate the feasibility of vernacular cosmopolitanism by focusing on Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*. I examine how the novel represents day-to-day cross-cultural encounters and interactions in the glocalised space against the

⁷³ Maria Nikolaeva Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille, *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), p. 5.

⁷⁴ Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), p. 133.

background of global migration and multicultural conviviality. In *On Beauty*, Zadie Smith updates E. M. Forster's instruction to 'only connect' across gender and class lines in *Howards End* (1910). The original concept 'only connect' is assigned a broader meaning: it denotes cross-cultural and cross-national connections in the turn of the twenty-first century United States – a cosmopolitan space which people from diverse backgrounds migrate to and dwell in. In particular, *On Beauty* foregrounds the cross-border encounter between two polarised groups of people: the figures within the Euro-American academy from above and the dispossessed and marginalised people – such as the Haitian immigrants and working-class ethnic minorities – from below. Paying special attention to the underprivileged individuals represented in the novel, I examine the connection between cross-border encounters in the glocalised sphere and the prospect of 'vernacular cosmopolitanism' – a type of cosmopolitanism that thrives at the margins of society. *On Beauty* shows that there are both challenges to, and possibilities for, vernacular cosmopolitanism. In the process of establishing cross-border encounters and interactions, the underprivileged people's oscillation between adhering to nationalist sentiments and affirming broader global commitments brings to light concrete historical, economic, and cultural disparities. By showing the complexity of vernacular cosmopolitanism, *On Beauty* pulls the concept out of the shadow of philosophical discussions.

While Chapter Two focuses on atomised individuals and their cross-border encounters in the context of glocal cohabitation, Chapter Three examines how those with a strong sense of religious and cultural identification before migration contribute to cosmopolitanism after they settle down in the new country. To address this subject, I shift my attention to diasporic public spaces, investigating the emergence of globalised cosmopolitan Islam in the Pakistani diaspora as represented in Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*. Aslam foregrounds a series of new issues which diasporic Pakistanis confront in the contexts of late twentieth and early twenty-first-century migration to Britain. I explore the gradual evolution of the Islamic religion and culture in this context and investigate the potential generation of globalised cosmopolitan Islam within the community. Ideas about religion and culture, as Pnina Werbner notes,

are best understood within changing political, social and economic power dynamics.⁷⁵ Aslam demonstrates that the Islamic religion and culture in the Pakistani diaspora is already globalised, and he represents multiple forms of globalised Islam, such as orthodox Islam, resurgent Sufism, and the young Muslims' practice of westernised Islam. A series of factors in the diasporic space influences the evolution of globalised Islam, such as the residents' intense feelings of loneliness and anxiety in a foreign country, prominent discourses of Islamophobia, and cultural racism in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks. These factors reshape British Pakistanis' relationship to Islam, and they create the conditions both for conservative entrenchment and for the generation of cosmopolitan sentimentality.

The last chapter on Hari Kunzuru's *Transmission* initiates a discussion about digital cosmopolitanism that may emerge in the contemporary information capitalist society, where the spread and exchange of information become essential to social and economic activities. *Transmission* portrays a contemporary world characterised by the popularity of computers and people's growing reliance on the internet and other digital media. Revealing the wide digital divide between the elite Guy Swift and the digital worker Arjun Mehta, the novel demonstrates that the coming age of informatisation does not herald the end of oppression and exploitation. Nonetheless, *Transmission* also invites us to note positive signs of digital cosmopolitanism by foregrounding the instability of the information capitalist society. The computer virus created by Arjun, who is not simply a digital worker but also a potential hacker, leads to a forceful 'cyberspace rebellion', and it radically undermines the hierarchical power structure. Unlike conventional forms of rebellion, cyberspace rebellion is more difficult to suppress and it tends to resonate with distant others regardless of national borders. What may further generate a cosmopolitan consciousness is the outbreak of a worldwide digital disaster, as the computer virus gradually develops beyond Arjun's control. During computer virus outbreaks, many previously hidden social and political

⁷⁵ Pnina Werbner, 'The Translocation of Culture: "Community Cohesion" and the Force of Multiculturalism in History', *The Sociological Review*, 53.4 (2005), 745-768.

problems within the nation-states are exposed to the public. As people across the world collectively witness and experience the upheaval, they start to realise the need for global cooperation; bonds between strangers are forged in virtual communities and these bonds also begin to extend to the real world.

On the Threshold of a New Age: Post-1989 East-Central Europe and Cosmopolitan Transition in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled*

Introduction

As Sean Matthews and Sebastian Groes observe, 'Ishiguro is rightly recognized as a master of the precise representation of specific places and historical circumstances'.¹ The fact that Ishiguro represents particular places and historical moments often leads to the assumption that his novels express specific national traditions or attributes. This is true, for example, for the apparent Japaneseness of his first and second novels *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) and *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), and for the apparent Englishness of the third novel *The Remains of the Day* (1989). However, as Matthews and Groes also emphasise, despite the realistic features, Ishiguro's narratives 'set at significant tangents or angles to those histories [and places]'.² The 'tangents and angles' warn against too faithful readings of Ishiguro's work: they encourage readers to see grander concerns and universal issues that go beyond specific places and historical circumstances. Rebecca Walkowitz rightly points out that Ishiguro's novels are 'treasonous', and thereby have cosmopolitan features, because they suggest that 'steadfast and unconflicted allegiances are neither possible nor desirable'.³ Ishiguro's novels demonstrate the delicate interplay between specificity and universality: this can be demonstrated in his fourth novel *The Unconsoled* (1995), which is an allegory of post-1989 East-Central Europe and yet reveals the problem of fixed allegiances to either communism or capitalism, and thus it is a suitable text to examine the prospect of new cosmopolitanism at that historical moment.

¹ Sean Matthews and Sebastian Groes, 'Your Words Open Windows for Me: The Art of Kazuo Ishiguro', in *Kazuo Ishiguro: Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Sean Matthews and Sebastian Groes (London: Continuum, 2009), pp. 1-8 (p. 3).

² Matthews and Groes, 'Your Words Open Windows for Me', p. 3.

³ Walkowitz, Rebecca, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism beyond the Nation*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p.109.

The revolutions of 1989 were a turning point in the history of East-Central Europe. The fall of the Berlin Wall symbolised the movement of East-Central Europe away from the Soviet Union's totalitarian regime. Realising the deceptive features of the total community that they used to accept, local people were confronted with the task of re-establishing social order and building a different future. In particular, the collapse of the Soviet Union seemed to have proved the ultimate triumph of liberalism and the universal applicability of Western values. Francis Fukuyama argues that the 1989 revolution indicates the 'end of history': in his view, it marks 'the endpoint of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government'.⁴ Against that background, opening up to the West and embracing, and even hoping to be assimilated by, the newly arrived liberal culture became the new horizon of post-1989 East-Central European politics. As Gerard Delanty notes, in the transition from communism to capitalism, East-Central Europe had been, in effect, partly absorbed by the West, while the West 'seemed to have proved its self-proclaimed moral superiority over communism'.⁵ However, while the one-sided imitation of the West seemed to be a desirable way out of the transitional period, post-1989 East-Central Europe was a chaotic space where the influence of the communist past intertwined and overlapped with that of the Westernised present. The creation of a new social order involved both continuity and discontinuity, both resistance and acceptance. As Michal Illner observes, 'the transformations [were] more complicated, conflictual and prolonged than originally expected': the collapse of the communist regime did not necessarily gesture towards a culture of openness and flexibility, and people's reliance on the West coexisted with suspicion.⁶ More importantly, as Illner notes, East-Central Europeans were 'creating a new social reality which [was] not a mere transfer of the

⁴ Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History?', *The National Interest*, 16 (1989), 3-18 (p. 4).

⁵ Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), p. 133.

⁶ Michal Illner, 'Post-Communist Transformation Revisited', *Czech Sociological Review*, (1996), 157-169 (p. 157).

known society models'.⁷ A new social order is not built in an 'institutional void' but rather constructed out of the legacies of communism. The interplay between the communist past and the capitalist present provided an imaginative route to a cosmopolitan future characterised by 'universality plus difference', and seemed to promise a hybridised culture that belongs to neither the East nor the West.

Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *The Unconsoled*, as an allegory of post-communist East-Central Europe, creates an imaginary realm where the nuances and complexity of the locality are foregrounded, and it enables us to examine the emergence of cosmopolitanism at that historical moment. Although *The Unconsoled*, unlike Ishiguro's earlier fictions, is experimental in style and has surrealistic features, the unnamed and even mysterious fictional city is, as many critics have observed, identifiably modelled on post-1989 East-Central Europe. The novel's reference to East-Central Europe's communist past is not difficult to detect. For example, the name of Max Sattler, the legendary leader of the city, combines the names of Karl Marx and Joseph Stalin, who exerted great influence on East-Central Europe in the communist period, and the brick wall built by 'some eccentric person at the end of the last century' alludes to the Berlin Wall constructed during the Cold War by the German Democratic Republic.⁸ Notably, new elements that speak to liberal and capitalist culture have been incorporated into the local space where the imprints of communism remain. Tourism flourishes in the city; local people go to the cinema to watch American films; and numerous 'little souvenir shops, confectioners and bakeries' are opened in the Old Town (31). The protagonist Ryder, a world-renowned musician coming from England to give a recital at the local concert, is one major representation of the newly arrived Western influence. The local people's diverse attitudes towards Ryder and their complex interactions with him manifest the dynamics of post-1989 East-Central Europe. Presenting the fictional city as a chaotic place where two distinct

⁷ Illner, 'Post-Communist Transformation Revisited', p. 157.

⁸ Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Unconsoled*, (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. 387. In this chapter, further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

cultures – communism and capitalism – unprecedentedly meet and intertwine with each other, *The Unconsoled* demonstrates the complexity of that transitional period in post-communist East-Central Europe, and it foregrounds the local people's endeavour to balance the legacy of the communist past and their embrace of the Westernised present.

I contend that *The Unconsoled* does not represent the revolutions of 1989 as a sign of East-Central Europe's radical departure from the communist past, and the novel undermines the popular belief after 1989 that a new cosmopolitanism could emerge from the universal acceptance of liberal doctrines and ideologies. Through its rich symbolism and allegory, the novel encourages us to note that the collapse of an authoritarian regime does not necessarily lead to the establishment of a new political order. In *The Unconsoled*, Mr Brodsky, with a shadowy connection to a Russian past, suggests a metaphor for revived dictatorship. Representing how the local elites strive to help Mr Brodsky regain popularity among the citizens by refashioning him as a heroic figure, the novel alludes to the trend of retreating to a past model of governance through the creation of a national myth. Nonetheless, the incompetence of Mr Brodsky and the dissent among the elites themselves also suggest that the programme of recreating a totalitarian regime is destined to fail. Furthermore, the fact that Ryder, who represents the coming force of liberalism, participates in the locals' political discussions gestures towards the creation of a hybrid regime that can no longer be entirely Soviet. In *The Unconsoled*, while the elites mainly decide on the city's political transformation, other citizens that Ryder encounters in the public space manifest the social and cultural transitions in post-communist East-Central Europe. On the one hand, some citizens have high expectations of Ryder and greatly rely on him, hoping that he helps lift the pressing crisis of the city. On the other, some are suspicious of Ryder and even resent him, fearing that he gets too deeply involved in local affairs. The citizens' diverse attitudes towards Ryder and their complex interactions with him demonstrate the tension between openness and insularity in the landscape of post-1989 East-Central Europe. Portraying Ryder as a largely indifferent figure, *The Unconsoled* further challenges the oversimplified view of

cosmopolitanism which endorses the one-sided imitation of the West. Perceiving himself as an outsider to the city, Ryder tends to engage in local affairs in a highly passive manner, and consequently, he often fails to gain the trust of the locals. In the fictional East-Central European city, rising nationalist and populist feelings conflict and coexist with people's desire to catch up with the West and open up to the world. Nostalgia for the communist past also emerges: the wave of nostalgia is less about people's wish to return to the Soviet era than about their disappointment with, and active critique of, the unfulfilled neo-liberal promises of a bright future. As Paul Blokker stresses, 'the Central Europe concept points to the significance of a continuous quest for mutual recognition and understanding, and thus to the construction of European identity on the basis of a dialogue between identities'.⁹ Dramatising the dynamics of the European city, *The Unconsoled* captures the atmosphere of uncertainty in post-1989 East-Central Europe, foregrounding the delicate historical balancing between the two utterly discredited forms of social and political organisation.

Literature Review: Looking back into History – East-Central Europe at the Crossroads

Central Europe has been, historically, a territory with blurred geopolitical boundaries and a mixture of diverse cultures. As Timothy Garton Ash notes, Central Europe is 'a forest of historical complexity [...] a territory where peoples, cultures, languages are fantastically intertwined'.¹⁰ While Western Europeans, generally speaking, live in an unambiguously demarcated space, Central Europeans may struggle to imagine the ephemeral geographies of their homeland because it does not conform to a popular

⁹ Paul Blokker, 'Europe "United in Diversity" From a Central European Identity to Post-Nationality?', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 11.2 (2008), 257-274 (p. 267).

¹⁰ Timothy Garton Ash, *The Uses of Adversity: Essays on the Fate of Central Europe* (Cambridge: Granta, 1991), p. 169.

narrative of political, social and cultural homogeneity. As Richard Robinson states, Central Europe is ‘a microcosm that celebrates cosmopolitanism and supranationality’: national boundaries have been constantly redrawn, and sovereign states have been confected, resurrected, expanded or contracted, so that each place may have several names, and people can easily travel to other countries and even change their citizenship.¹¹ However, the Second World War marked a turning point in the history of Central Europe. After the Yalta conference, a new bipolar Europe was constructed on either side of the Iron Curtain; specifically, East-Central Europe was ruled by the Soviet Union. As Tony Judt notes, ‘Soviet power appropriated national myth for its own ends, banned all reference to uncomfortable or conflictual moments save those which retroactively anticipated its own arrival and enforced a new “fraternity” upon the Eastern half of Europe’.¹² Although Central Europe used to be a hybrid space that celebrated supranationality, the coming of communism imposed a uniform, centralised and standardised culture, suppressing the region’s cosmopolitan tradition and creating a national myth for its own sake. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 marked the end of the communist regime in East-Central Europe: with the collapse of the Soviet Union, East-Central Europeans were confronted with the task of revisioning their communist past and establishing a new social order.

In post-communist East-Central Europe, the main trend was the attempt to integrate into and catch up with the West. Reflecting on a lost cosmopolitan tradition, Milan Kundera notes that Central Europe ‘longed to be a condensed version of Europe itself in all its cultural variety’, and he condemns the coming of the Soviet power by saying that it was ‘not merely a political catastrophe’ but also ‘an attack on their civilization’.¹³ Kundera argues that East-Central Europeans needed to rekindle the cosmopolitan spirit, and to do so, they sought to return to Europe and reunite with

¹¹ Richard Robinson, ‘Nowhere, in Particular: Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Unconsoled* and Central Europe’, *Critical Quarterly*, 48.4 (2006), 107-130 (p. 113).

¹² Tony Judt, ‘The Past is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe’, *Daedalus*, 121.4 (1992), 83-118 (p. 100).

¹³ Milan Kundera, ‘A Kidnapped West or Culture Bows Out’, *Granta*, 11 (1984), 95-118.

the West.¹⁴ Kundera's advocacy of returning to and reuniting with Western Europe reflects the mainstream thought in post-communist East-Central Europe. Nonetheless, in a belated attempt to catch up with the West, East-Central Europe tended to be reduced to a disadvantaged periphery during the process of reunification. Blokker observes that until the end of the 1990s, the debate on 'transition' was dominated by approaches that shared a number of elementary assumptions about Eastern Europe's desired trajectory of social change. As Blokker summarises it, the desired social changes included: the post-communist countries' convergence with Western Europe, rather than divergence or persistent difference from it; their incorporation into a Western-type democratic market economy; attention to formal, procedural institutions (e.g. democracy, a market economy) and relative neglect of substantive issues (e.g. national and regional identity, culture).¹⁵ This demonstrates that the post-1989 transition was based on the East's imitation of the West: East-Central European countries tended to be assimilated by the West, being coerced into internalising the existing set of norms and values rather than contributing to their modification or transformation.

The project of 'returning to Europe' and integrating into the West soon lost its utopian appeal, as has been shown by Gerard Delanty in *Inventing Europe*. To begin with, the cost of 'returning to Europe' was the widening of regional differences within states. As Delanty points out, one direct consequence of the 1989-1990 revolution 'was the exacerbation of ethnic and regional tensions': among post-communist countries, the speed and level of modernisation were uneven – while some countries have been more or less westernised, others have to a large extent been abandoned to an uncertain fate.¹⁶ The uneven development among post-communist countries is one main reason for the rise of nationalist sentiments and ethnic and regional conflicts. The crisis of 1989 has become more severe since 1992: the process of European

¹⁴ Kundera, 'A Kidnapped West', 95-118.

¹⁵ Paul Blokker, 'Post-Communist Modernization, Transition Studies, and Diversity in Europe', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 8.4 (2005), 503-525 (p. 504).

¹⁶ Delanty, *Inventing Europe*, p. 139.

integration has been accompanied by an upsurge in regional nationalism as well as a stronger resistance from the nation-states themselves.¹⁷ Many feared that damaging consequences would arise as administrative and fiscal power was increasingly concentrated in the hands of a bureaucratic power bloc at Brussels. The tendency of resisting the trend of westernisation was exacerbated by the fact that liberal democracy was at a low ebb at that time. Western countries found it difficult to solve their own problems, such as the all-time high unemployment rate and economic recession.¹⁸ Hence the post-1989 transition in East-Central Europe cannot be reduced to simple assimilation into the West. In the post-communist constellation, the rise of nationalism, incomplete democratisation, and the negative impacts of capitalism have all led to major social and geographic disparities. After a period of collective excitement over the coming new age, East-Central Europeans began to realise that they should discard the simple plan of copying the West and instead consider how to rebalance acceptance and resistance, as well as reflect on the complex interplay between the communist past and westernised present. *The Unconsoled* (1995), published six years after the 1989 revolution, captures the complexity of this situation.

As Blokker argues, envisioning a new East-Central Europe requires acknowledging its unique historical trajectory: the simple project of imitating the West neglects the fact that the new social order is not built on top of the ruins of communism, but is rather constructed with the legacies of communism.¹⁹ Like all revolutions, the revolutions of 1989 were not quite as radical as they purported to be; accordingly, what happened to post-1989 East-Central Eastern European countries was characterised by complex continuity with communism. Questioning the likelihood of a radical political transformation from a totalitarian regime to a democratic government, Ken Jowitt stresses ‘the absence of a democratic established political elite’ in post-communist countries.²⁰ He contends that the elites have not yet

¹⁷ Delanty, *Inventing Europe*, p. 140.

¹⁸ Delanty, *Inventing Europe*, p. 141-42.

¹⁹ Blokker, ‘Post-Communist Modernization, Transition Studies, and Diversity in Europe’, p. 509.

²⁰ Ken Jowitt, *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction*, (Berkeley: University of

‘worked out civil and practical modes of interaction’ nor managed to ‘identify and organize a socio-political constituency in a regular manner’.²¹ Echoing Jowitt’s observation, *The Unconsoled* dramatises the chaos and confusion among the local elites as they struggle to restore social order, foregrounding the tension between their tendency to preserve a totalitarian regime and the desire to explore a new democratic model. The ‘cultural lag’ among the general public at an institutional level and in other areas of life means that people cannot make a radical departure from the communist past. As Piotr Sztompka points out, people need ‘new cultural resources’ – ‘codes, frames, rules, new “habits of the heart”’ – and the fact that ‘the cultural “habits of the heart” show surprising resilience’ highlights the significance of both continuity and discontinuity, both universality and difference.²² The path East-Central European countries would choose is largely circumscribed by the endurance of older institutions. Therefore, envisioning a new East-Central Europe requires both consenting to a set of shared foundational and universalist values and recognising the importance of diversity, intercultural dialogue, and mutual understanding.

One noticeable phenomenon in post-1989 East-Central Europe is the wave of nostalgia for communism: nostalgic sentiment is less about people’s desire to retreat to the communist past than a revelation of their disappointment with, and active critique of, the westernised present. As Frances Pine suggests, ‘social memory is selective and contextual’: when people evoke the ‘good’ communist past, they are not denying the negative aspects of it but rather emphasising the positive ones – such as economic security, full employment, universal healthcare and education.²³ For example, in *The Unconsoled*, the civic councillor Karl Pedersen laments the loss of the ‘good old days’ when there were ‘large happy families’ and ‘real lasting

California Press, 1992), p. 295.

²¹ Jowitt, *New World Disorder*, p. 295.

²² Piotr Sztompka, ‘Looking back: The Year 1989 as a Cultural and Civilizational break’, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 29.2 (1996), 115-129 (p. 12).

²³ Frances Pine, ‘Retreat to the Household? Gendered Domains in Post-socialist Poland’, in *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*, ed. by C. M. Hann (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 95–113, p. 111.

friendships’, and this alludes to the fraternity in communist times (97). Pedersen’s rosy memory of communism is inseparable from his disappointment with the current fragmented society – ‘a cold modern city’ – that he lives in (107). Meanwhile, Maria Nikolaeva Todorova also notes that post-communist nostalgia is ‘an activist critique of the present [by] using the past as a mirror and irony’: what is embedded in post-communist nostalgia are ‘elements of disappointment, social exhaustion, economic recategorization, generational fatigue, and the quest for dignity’.²⁴ Using the past as a mirror of the present, post-1989 East-Central Europeans, as represented by many citizens in *The Unconsoled*, strive to address and resolve current problems by evoking their good memories of communism, and their attempts to weave positive experiences from the communist past into the westernised present potentially paves the way for cosmopolitanism.

It is also important to note the rise of nationalism and xenophobia in post-communist countries, especially when people passed the initial stage and no longer fantasised about being incorporated into the West. According to Judy Batt and Kataryna Wolczuk, post-Soviet revolutions ‘reawakened the historical aspirations of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe for “national self-determination”’.²⁵ After the collapse of the Soviet Union, East-Central Europeans finally had a chance to make their own decisions on domestic affairs. The public’s craving for self-determination correlates to strong nationalist sentiment. In *The Unconsoled*, despite the citizens’ proclaimed respect for Ryder, many of them are suspicious of, and even resentful towards, him. They tend to prevent Ryder from getting involved in domestic affairs. As Ivan Krastev states, post-communist countries understand more profoundly than any other place in Europe not only the advantages but the vulnerabilities of opening up to a foreign culture: as Krastev convincingly points out, the coming of communism,

²⁴ Maria Nikolaeva Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille, *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), p. 7.

²⁵ Judy Batt and Kataryna Wolczuk, *Region, State and Identity in Central and Eastern Europe*, (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 1.

after all, was ‘a form of “internationalism”’.²⁶ For many East-Central Europeans, the experience of living under the communist regime was traumatic. After the fall of the Soviet Union, it was hard for them to embrace another foreign force (even though this time it was from the West) or regain confidence in ‘those whose hearts are in Paris or London, whose money is in New York or Cyprus, and whose loyalty belongs to Brussels’.²⁷ This all adds to the uncertainty in post-1989 East-Central Europe; Ishiguro’s *The Unconsoled* captures the atmosphere of uncertainty and underlines the need to re-examine the emerging idea of cosmopolitanism at that transitional moment.

Section One: Dynamics in the Urban Space – *The Unconsoled* as an Allegory of Post-1989 East-Central Europe

Although Ishiguro claims that the setting of *The Unconsoled* is ‘by and large a landscape of imagination’, it is not just a portrait of anywhere but of somewhere in particular.²⁸ As many critics have noted, the unnamed and even mysterious city depicted in the fiction is identifiably modelled on Central and Eastern Europe.²⁹ For instance, Richard Robinson states that the setting of *The Unconsoled* is ‘made up of a congeries of some recognisable particulars’ drawn from diverse places; despite the diversity, these particulars all coalesce in the area which signifies ‘Central Europe’.³⁰

²⁶ Krastev, ‘The Specter Haunting Europe’, p. 93.

²⁷ Krastev, ‘The Specter Haunting Europe’, p. 93.

²⁸ Dylan Otto Krider, ‘Rooted in a Small Space: An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro’, *Kenyon Review*, 20 (1998), 146–54 (p. 151).

²⁹ Among all the critics, Richard Robinson has made most detailed analysis on the connection between the fictional European town in *The Unconsoled* and its reference to Central and Eastern Europe: ‘Nowhere, in Particular: Kazuo Ishiguro’s “The Unconsoled” and Central Europe’, *Critical Quarterly*, 48.4 (2006), 107–130. Apart from Robinson, Barry Lewis also refers to ‘an unnamed town, somewhere in the heart of Europe’: *Kazuo Ishiguro*, 104; Brain W. Shaffer to an ‘unidentified but apparently middle European city’: *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 92; and many others.

³⁰ Robinson, ‘Nowhere, in Particular’, p. 112.

The particulars noted by Robinson permeate the novel. For example, at the Hungarian café it is recommended that Ryder has ‘a piece of the apple strudel’, and the strudel is a typically Austrian pastry as well as a common cuisine in other Central European countries. Moreover, the Volksgarten mentioned in the novel, meaning ‘people’s garden’ in German, is a public park in the Innere Stadt first district of Vienna. People and objects from diverse countries – Hungary, Germany, Switzerland, France, England, and many others – are invoked in the novel, making the fictional city identifiably somewhere in Europe and yet a territory characterised by hybridity and supranationality. However, although traces of diverse European places can be found in the fictional city, as Richard Robinson points out, the city is ‘not hybridised in a balanced, pan-European way’: it is overwhelmingly centred around the Central and Eastern European area.³¹ People and objects from Central European countries appear more frequently than those from elsewhere; while France and England are ‘far afield’, the Hungarian café in the Old Town – an important location constantly mentioned in the novel – is local, a place which the elderly porters frequently visit and where they discuss provincial business.

Specifically, the local space is imprinted by such historical marks as the Sattler Monument and the ‘brick wall’, which allude to East-Central European history during the Cold War when the region was ruled by the Soviet Union. The Sattler monument is built to commemorate a legendary authority figure, Max Sattler. As I have noted, the name Max Sattler is a combination of Karl Marx and Joseph Stalin; the monument to Sattler is reminiscent of East-Central Europe when it was influenced by Marx’s communist theory and under Stalin’s totalitarian regime. Correlating with propaganda mechanisms related to the personality cult of communist leaders, the Sattler monument is part of the city’s ‘communist heritage’, to use the term employed by Ștefan Stanciugelul, Andrei Țăranul and Iulian Rusu, which functioned as a form and aspect to legitimise Soviet political power.³² Just like the monument, the ‘brick wall’

³¹ Robinson, ‘Nowhere, in Particular’, p. 109.

³² Ștefan Stanciugelu, Andrei Țăranu and Iulian Rusu, ‘The Communist Cultural Heritage in the Social Representations of a Post-Communist Generation’, *European*

in the novel is also connected with East-Central European history. The brick wall, which was built by ‘some eccentric person at the end of the last century’, and runs ‘across the entire breadth of the street’, alludes to the Berlin Wall (387-8). The wall completely seals the way and divides urban space in half, in a manner reminiscent of the days when East Germany was partitioned from West Germany during the Cold War. Such constructs as the Sattler monument and the brick wall manifest the historical complexity of the city. As an allegory of East-Central Europe, *The Unconsoled* demonstrates how the urban sphere was once invaded and ruled by a foreign force; it was also a partitioned space that left little room for openness.

Importantly, such constructs, which speak to the Soviet past, are remodelled to the new conditions by the city’s transition to the westernised present; the encounter and interplay between the two distinct cultures potentially make the local space an incubator of cosmopolitanism. As Lily Hoffman and Jiří Musil note in their study of post-communist Prague, after the end of the communist regime, the meaning of historical sites and their preservation were ‘also in flux, and [they] illustrate the complex interplay of continuity and change’.³³ In *The Unconsoled*, the Sattler monument – ‘a white building at the peak of the hill’ – appears to be an ancient and dilapidated construct that largely contrasts with the city. Resembling a turret that has been removed from a ‘medieval castle’, the monument now shows signs of damage, which is demonstrated by the ‘single vertical slit near the top’ (182). The intentional distancing of the city from the communist past is illustrated by the location of the Sattler monument, which has now been moved to the margin of the city – ‘in an open countryside surrounded by windswept fields’, away from the citizens (172). The dilapidation of the Sattler monument and its marginalised position symbolise the fading influence of the communist past, even though the monument’s bright colour (‘white’) and its conspicuous location (‘at the peak of the hill’) suggest that the

Journal of Science and Theology, 9.2 (2013), 1-17.

³³ Lily M. Hoffman and Jiří Musil, ‘Culture Meets Commerce: Tourism in Postcommunist Prague’, in *The Tourist City*, ed. by Dennis R. Judd and Susan S. Fainstein (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1999), 179-197 (p. 194).

shadow of authoritarianism continues to haunt the city. Just as the meaning of the Sattler monument has changed, so the brick wall which symbolises partitioned Germany during the Cold War has now become a famous ‘tourist attraction’. As Hoffman and Musil note, tourism articulates global market forces and it contributes to reviving the historic core of a city.³⁴ In line with Hoffman and Musil’s observation, the brick wall that alludes to the Berlin Wall is now symbolic of the prosperous tourism industry of the new age. Nearby are gift shops selling postcards featuring the wall, and each year numerous visitors come to see the wall (388). As the middle-aged woman who comes out of the gift shop comments, ‘in the summer, this whole area ... gets completely full of tourists’ from across the world (388). The changed function of the brick wall suggests that the urban landscape is remodelled to new conditions by the transition to capitalism; it demonstrates the complex interplay between the communist past and the westernised and globalised present, which gives hope for cosmopolitanism. A new sense of worldliness is conveyed through the wall: in front of it gather people coming from around the world, ‘Americans, Japanese, all taking photographs of it’ (388). The image of people ‘taking photographs’ of the wall and the ‘postcard after postcard *proudly* featuring the wall’ (emphasis added) are also reminiscent of Craig Calhoun’s warning about ‘soft cosmopolitanism’, which only shows ‘a willingness to experience diversity as packaged for consumer tastes’.³⁵ Despite the promising cosmopolitan message, the tourists’ admiration of the wall conveys a sense of collective unconsciousness, while active global intervention or participation is absent.

The scene in which the local people go to the cinema and immerse themselves in the American film *2001: A Space Odyssey* epitomises the East-Central Europeans’ collective embrace of new liberal culture after the fall of communism. The film *2001: A Space Odyssey* is not randomly chosen. Directed by Stanley Kubrick, the film was

³⁴ Hoffman and Musil, ‘Culture Meets Commerce’, p. 179, 195.

³⁵ Craig J Calhoun, ‘The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travelers: Toward a Critique of Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism’, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 101.4 (2002), 869-897 (p. 889).

produced during the Cold War and released in 1968, and it is renowned for its allusions to the geopolitical tension between the two superpowers – the United States and the Soviet Union.³⁶ In *The Unconsoled*, Ishiguro repeatedly mentions HAL 9000 (the sentient and dangerous computer in *2001: A Space Odyssey*), and he foregrounds the episode when the American astronaut ‘carefully check[s] over his giant screwdriver’ and ‘prepare[s] for the dismantling of HAL’ (108). In the original film, HAL keeps omniscient control over man, gives orders, and suppresses any attempt to challenge him. In *The Unconsoled*, the image of HAL is used as an allegory of the totalitarian regime of the Soviet Union, and the scene in which an American actor takes on the mission of dismantling HAL represents the ultimate triumph of liberalism over communism. In the novel, the local cinema that screens *2001: A Space Odyssey* symbolises the public space where the triumph of liberalism is propagandized to the local people. The public’s warm acceptance of liberal culture is demonstrated by the fullness of the cinema and the popularity of the film: people across the spectrum of age, gender and class all come to watch the film – ‘an almost festive mood was pervading the cinema. Everywhere people were exchanging jokes and little remarks as they watched the film’ (102). The audiences at the cinema eagerly wait to watch the scene in which ‘the astronaut dismantles HAL’, which demonstrates the popular faith in cosmopolitanism in post-1989 East-Central Europe, where people are optimistic about the assistance and intervention from the West (108).

Nonetheless, beneath the seemingly uniform acceptance of liberal culture, the scene at the cinema also illustrates the dynamics of the locality where people’s nostalgia for the communist past coexists with their embrace of the westernised present. As Svetlana Boym observes, in post-communist countries, there was ‘affective yearning for a community with collective memory, a longing for continuity in a fragmented world’.³⁷ In *The Unconsoled*, a uniformed woman at the door to the cinema is selling a ‘ragged, old manual’ that her son once used: the manual teaches

³⁶ Robert Kolker, *Stanley Kubrick’s 2001: A Space Odyssey: New Essays*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

³⁷ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, (New York: Basic, 2001), xiv.

people everything about refurbishing the house – ‘decorating, tiling’ ‘everything step by step with very clear diagrams’ (92). The fact that an outdated manual about refurbishing the house is sold at the cinema – which is the public realm where liberalism is propagandised – symbolises people’s indifference to the trend of westernisation and their latent desire to go back to the past. The nostalgia for communism is also demonstrated by Karl Pedersen, the civic councillor who comes to watch the American film. Although he is at the cinema, Pedersen is absentminded: instead of watching the film, he laments the ‘good old days’ that the local people have now lost. As Pedersen recalls, there used to be a time when the city was ‘a very happy community’: ‘[t]here were large happy families here. And real lasting friendships’ (97). The ‘large happy family’ and the ‘real lasting friendship’ in Pedersen’s memory is linked with the communist past when collectiveness and uniformity were valued in society. Pedersen bemoans the cold and fragmented present life since the fall of communism: as he notes, ‘[e]ach of us could recount dozens of sad cases. Of lives blighted by loneliness. Of families despairing of ever rediscovering the happiness they’d once taken for granted’ (113). By portraying Pedersen and the uniformed woman at the cinema, the novel foregrounds the complexity of cosmopolitanism, which is not only about universality but differences: it shows that the city is not simply characterised by a univocal celebration of liberalism but also by the haunting echoes of the communist past, through which the complex interplay between the communist past and the capitalist present is foregrounded.

Section Two: Path-Dependency and Recreating National Myths – the Metaphor of Music, the Local Concert, and the Elites’ Efforts to Rehabilitate Mr Brodsky

As is the case with film, in *The Unconsoled* music represents a relationship with the past: its significance is not simply confined to the realm of art since music and musicians convey social and political messages. For instance, Mr Christoff, the musician who has largely shaped the city’s culture, symbolises the Soviet leadership

that East-Central European elites and politicians used to embrace. In the novel, Christoff arrives at the city when the citizens feel unsettled about the loss of talented local artists and are eagerly expecting ‘a chance for a change’ (100). Known at that time as ‘a dominant figure around which so much revolved’, Christoff soon establishes his artistic authority in the city (98). He introduces a ‘system’ to help citizens understand modern music. The collective admiration for him leads to a general contempt for the local artists. However, it becomes increasingly clear that Christoff’s music is ‘too functional’, being ‘cold’ and ‘dry’ (101-102). Christoff’s systematic and mechanical way of interpreting music represents the ‘formalist’ musicology that Kundera notes dominated communist Central and Eastern Europe.³⁸ Christoff’s music also points to the standardised and uniform culture of the Soviet era which resulted in the loss of distinct regional cultures in East-Central Europe. Christoff, who has been widely acclaimed, ‘puts himself and his ideas about’; the image of his raising a ‘blue folder high above his head’ also makes him an autocratic figure resembling the communist leaders (99, 196). Importantly, the novel foregrounds Christoff’s deep connection with the local elites and politicians. As Tony Judt points out, in post-communist East-Central Europe, ‘[n]o matter how many times people proclaim that “they” did it to “us”, the fact is that very few people could or did object to Communist power’.³⁹ In *The Unconsoled*, Pedersen is compelled to admit that it is the civic councillors themselves who eventually make Christoff a tyrannical person. The politicians ‘fussed over him, pressed him for his views on everything’; they cannot deny their complicity with Christoff since ‘[v]irtually every council member had at some time invited him to his house’ (100). Pedersen’s confession is important in that it reflects the emergent ‘cosmopolitan memory’, a term coined by Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider. As they note, competing conceptions of victimhood are thrust into dynamics as memory moves beyond national borders.⁴⁰ To some extent,

³⁸ Kundera, ‘A Kidnapped West’, 95-118.

³⁹ Judt, ‘The Past is Another Country’, p. 101.

⁴⁰ Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, ‘Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory’, *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5.1 (2002),

Pedersen's memory becomes cosmopolitan because it shows the local leaders' rising awareness of their shared responsibility together with the communist autocrats for the traumatic past. In retrospect, it is difficult to draw a clear line between victims and persecutors.

In contrast to Christoff, the newly arrived musician Ryder, who comes to perform on one significant Thursday night, is symbolic of the coming force of Western liberalism. As Natalie Reitano points out, Ryder has a definite national origin and inferred ethnicity: he hails from England and is presumably 'Anglo-Saxon'.⁴¹ As a successful and globally influential musician, Ryder is paid the greatest compliments on his arrival. As Miss Stratmann, the person in charge of Ryder's visit, says, '[m]any people here believe you to be not only the world's finest living pianist, but perhaps the very greatest of the century' (11). The strangely excessive compliments paid to Ryder indicate his superior status in the minds of the local people, and they also suggest that Ryder, like Christoff, is not simply an artistic professional but represents a form of socio-political power. The local concert that Ryder is to attend is not an ordinary one; rather, it assumes much socio-political significance. The concert is an important event that has gathered together people from all walks of life; as it turns out, it plays an essential part in solving the city's 'pressing crisis' – a crisis that almost everyone in the city is aware of. The symbolic significance of Ryder is also illustrated by his special relationship with Christoff. In the locals' minds, Ryder is the person who can help the city rid itself of the influence of Christoff. This implies that Ryder is representative of the coming liberal forces that dominated the world after the fall of the Soviet Union. Recollecting the time when the local elites and politicians collectively welcomed Christoff and followed his lead, Pedersen confesses that now they all need assistance from Ryder. In this light, Ryder, as an 'outsider' whom the local people believe they 'must look up to', is the representation of the newly arrived liberal force that may help the city overcome the communist legacy (100).

87-106.

⁴¹ Natalie Reitano, 'The Good Wound: Memory and Community in *The Unconsoled*', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 49.4 (2007), 361-386 (p. 382).

However, although Ryder appears to be warmly welcomed by the citizens, it is Mr Brodsky – an alcoholic musician with a wound that was inflicted in Russia – whom the Countess and civic councillors truly seek to rehabilitate, and who reveals the local elites’ tendency to follow the old political patterns from the communist era. As Ivan Szelenyi and Szonja Szelényi note, ‘continuity in personnel’ and ‘path-dependent transformation’ describe the realities of post-communist societies, and those who are expected to fill the power vacuum at times of system breakdown ‘do not necessarily have to be particularly competent’.⁴² In *The Unconsoled*, the local elites and politicians who are supposed to welcome Ryder upon his arrival have all left early. Ryder seems to have come ‘too late’, and those who wait for him in the morning ‘[have] to go off one by one’ to attend some ‘important appointments’ that appear to be more important than receiving the guest from afar (10). As it turns out, the important appointments are concentrated around another figure who will perform at the concert on Thursday night: Mr Brodsky. Just like Ryder, Mr Brodsky is a musician from a foreign country, but Mr Brodsky has connections with Russia and symbolises the continuity with the Soviet past. ‘Brodsky’ suggests a Russian name; we are informed that the wound in his leg, inflicted in Russia, has not fully healed: ‘the pain’s been bad. It’s never healed properly’ (308). While Mr Brodsky is said to be a prestigious conductor in his old country, no one has seen him playing music for a long time due to his alcoholism. However, despite his incompetence, the local elites are determined to help Mr Brodsky regain popularity among people at the concert. The Countess suggests that Mr Brodsky, rather than Ryder, should be the leading performer, and she argues that Mr Brodsky is the conductor ‘not only immensely gifted but who *shared [their] values*’ (113, italics original). The notion of ‘sharing’ their values accentuates the significance of social and political continuity, and this signals a grim cosmopolitan future since the preservation of the old ideas, systems and structures appears to be the main task. While the local elites had once celebrated Mr

⁴² Ivan Szelenyi and Szonja Szelényi, ‘Circulation or Reproduction of Elites during the Postcommunist Transformation of Eastern Europe’, *Theory and Society*, 24.5 (1995), 615-638, (p. 625, p. 630).

Christoff, their current plan of rehabilitating Mr Brodsky indicates the consistency with, rather than a radical departure from, the communist past. The nostalgia for, and symbolic reversion to, the Soviet era is demonstrated by the way the Countess and civic councillors gather together and listen to the old recordings of Mr Brodsky's music. Although these recordings are 'very old', Mr Brodsky's music has moved them to tears and lulled them 'into a deeply tranquil mood'; yet the 'sun going down outside' suggests that the 'good old days' – if they ever existed – cannot be retrieved (113).

In *The Unconsoled*, the local elites' endeavours to represent Mr Brodsky as a heroic figure, as well as the non-transparent process in which they engineer Brodsky's popularity with the public, is an allusion to how the post-communist countries sought to re-establish, rather than overthrow, a Soviet-mode regime. As Jowitt notes, the Soviet Union was 'a regime understood by its members as heroic, charismatic, and historically extraordinary'.⁴³ Jowitt also points out that 'secrecy is a defining feature of a charismatic status group (i.e. Soviet regime cadres)' that is concerned 'more with public awe than public legitimacy'.⁴⁴ In *The Unconsoled*, the local politicians' plan to engineer Mr Brodsky's popularity and their careful preparation for his performance on stage allude to the trend of re-establishing a Soviet model of governance in post-communist countries. In assisting Brodsky to regain popularity with the public, the politicians strive to represent Mr Brodsky as a heroic and charismatic figure, talking about him in 'the most positive light' and referring to him 'employing only the most respectful tones' (109). The whole process of aiding Mr Brodsky's recovery is shrouded in the utmost secrecy: the local elites and politicians 'took a great care to whom [they] even mentioned the idea' and they only spread the news 'slowly to the public at large' (109). This irony reveals how totalitarian countries feature little political transparency. Notably, Mr Brodsky's connection with 'the Peking Ballet' implies that the establishment of a new regime will be assisted by China. The local elites arrange for Mr Brodsky to sit close to 'the Peking Ballet' as they come to visit

⁴³ Jowitt, *New World Disorder*, p. 135.

⁴⁴ Jowitt, *New World Disorder*, p. 135.

the city: as Pedersen says, ‘when the Peking Ballet came here, for instance, we had him seated in the same box as Mr and Mrs Weiss’ (109). This demonstrates that the establishment of a new system is dependent on international cooperation. Instead of following the western model of governance, East-Central European countries may seek to restore the authoritarian regime by collaborating with China, which is the one remaining powerful communist country after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The fact that Ryder is not given enough time for piano practice, but is asked to prepare an inspiring speech and enhance Brodsky’s heroic image at the concert, demonstrates how the local elites use the Western force to assist in the recreation of a forceful Soviet-style leader. In *The Unconsoled*, although both Ryder and Mr Brodsky are giving recitals on Thursday night, Ryder’s performance, in the minds of the upper class, appears to be much less important than that of Brodsky. On the first day at the hotel, Ryder accidentally passes by Mr Brodsky’s room, where he is practising the piano. However, as if fearing that Ryder would interrupt Mr Brodsky’s practice, Hoffman, the hotel manager, quickly ‘grasped [his] arm and began firmly to lead [him] away’ (22). As Ryder complains, throughout the time he stays in the city he does not have a separate practice room or ‘a chance to touch a piano’; by contrast, people ‘appear quite ready to clear [the practice room] for Mr Brodsky’ (336). The upper class’ different attitudes towards Ryder and Brodsky with regards to their performance on stage hints that the citizens are discouraged from hearing and appreciating the new style of Western music, and this further indicates a purposeful distancing from liberal ideology at the institutional level. As it turns out, Ryder’s chief responsibility is to deliver an uplifting speech after Brodsky’s performance to enhance his public prestige. As Pederson says to Ryder, ‘each council member has now come to understand the importance of Thursday night. Everyone sees that Mr Brodsky must be given every chance’ (114). Accordingly, Ryder’s agreeing to come to the city proves crucial to them because, as Pederson acknowledges, ‘the people will listen to [Ryder] in a way they would never listen to one of [them]’ (114). Not knowing the exact content of Ryder’s speech, Pederson believes it is certain that ‘when [Ryder] finish[ed] speaking, no one in this city will ever again look at Mr Brodsky and see the shabby old drunk

they once did' (114). The speech is even designed to be delivered in a submissive and humiliating manner. There will be an 'electronic Scoreboard' hanging above Ryder, and at the end of each reply to the audience's questions, he is asked to 'leave the lectern and come to the edge of the stage and bow' (382). The huge 'electronic Scoreboard' appears to be a machine that monitors the speaker's speech and behaviour. The bows that Ryder is asked to repeatedly take humble him in front of the public – they signal his unconditional support for the local politicians' arrangement and underscore the glorious image of Brodsky. The whole scheme of rehabilitating Brodsky and displacing Ryder presents a bleak prospect for cosmopolitanism: it suggests a forceful displacement of liberal ideology and a reversion to the past model of Soviet governance.

However, despite all the efforts that have been made to rehabilitate Brodsky, the death of Brodsky's dog Bruno before the start of the concert foretells the failure of the myth-making project, and the chaotic situation at the banquet held to discuss Bruno's death exposes the division among the elites themselves. If Brodsky represents a powerful national leader the elites aspire to resurrect, Bruno, as Brodsky's closest friend, plays an important part in their myth-making project. Hearing of the unexpected death of Bruno, the Countess hurriedly organises a banquet to discuss the emergency. People from the upper circles are gathered together: '[t]here were at least a hundred people present, standing about in smart evening dress, holding glasses and exchanging conversation' (124). The death of Bruno severely undermines people's faith in Brodsky's recovery. Those at the banquet are thrown into a panic, beginning to believe that Brodsky 'will never get up from this', and feeling that, if this is the case, they 'have to face it' and 'call off Thursday night' straight away (126). The dissenting voices at the banquet demonstrate the shattered foundation of the elites' project of rehabilitating Brodsky, and it becomes increasingly clear that recreating a totalitarian leadership is hard to achieve. The crisis is temporarily solved by scapegoating Keller, the vet, and, later, by the proposal to erect a 'bronze statue' of Bruno as a form of commemoration. Believing that the dog exemplifies 'certain key virtues', a man in a velvet dinner jacket passionately exclaims, 'A statue. A bronze

statue. I propose we build a bronze statue for Bruno so that we can remember him forever. Something big and dignified... let us resolve here, this evening, to build a statue to Bruno!’ (142). The bronze statue of the dog is reminiscent of Alexander Pushkin’s narrative poem *The Bronze Horseman: A Petersburg Tale*. The poem is about the equestrian statue of Peter the Great in Saint Petersburg; in it, the Bronze Horseman, as Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock notes, symbolises ‘Tsar Peter, the city of St Petersburg, and the uncanny reach of autocracy over the lives of ordinary people’.⁴⁵ Just like the bronze horseman, in *The Unconsoled* the zest for erecting a bronze statue of Bruno symbolises the elites’ struggle to restore autocracy and perpetuate the national mythology and insularity. The fact that it is a statue of a ‘dog’ rather than a person adds an element of absurdity to the situation. However, the attempts to preserve a glorious image of Bruno soon fail as even more dissenting voices rise in the room. Some point out that many people have already witnessed the dog’s death. When the delivery man found the dead dog, he hoisted its body ‘high up onto [his] shoulder’ and carried it down the alley; with the dog’s upper body visible to the residents, people have all seen Bruno’s ‘cold’ and ‘stiffen[ed]’ body, with ‘his paws thrust[ing] in front of him’ (141). Furthermore, after Bruno’s death, many hidden realities about him have also been uncovered. As a tall bearded man at the banquet stands up and complains, ‘this is going too far. ... that dog was a menace, to other dogs and humans alike. And if Mr Brodsky had thought to comb the creature’s fur from time to time, and treat him for the skin infection it obviously had for years...’ (143). The fact that people have already seen the dog’s dead body and known about its sordid past makes it especially difficult to recreate a positive image of Bruno. The death of Bruno alludes to the futile efforts to retreat to the Soviet model of governance after the public has witnessed the collapse of the communist regime in the 1989 revolution.

While the death of Bruno exposes the dissent among the local elites themselves,

⁴⁵ Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, ‘The Bronze Horseman’, in *The Ashgate Encyclopedia of Literary and Cinematic Monsters*, ed. by Jeffrey Weinstock (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 58-60 (p. 60).

the public's pessimism about Brodsky's recovery reveals the division between the upper class and the general public: it shows how restoring a Soviet model of governance lacks mass support, which potentially paves the way for a cosmopolitan future. For all the propaganda about Brodsky's recovery, Miss Collins, Brodsky's ex-wife, points out that he is not competent to perform on such an important occasion: she notes that Brodsky has made little progress in music, since he 'stays [in front of the piano] for hours gently swaying on the stool without touching a note' (59). In most citizens' minds, Brodsky remains an old and feeble alcoholic. Frequenting the library, Brodsky is the one who strives to preserve order there: 'if anyone in the room started even the briefest of whispered exchanges, even merely greeted someone, he'd stand up and bellow at the culprit' (110). The fact that Brodsky 'bellows at the culprit' and tries to silence other readers' voices alludes to the efforts that he makes to maintain his supremacy and repress dissenting opinions among the public. However, the even louder noises in the library reveal that people are no longer willing to follow the lead of a Soviet authority: while Brodsky is immersed in 'a world of his own,' the library becomes much 'noisier on such occasions than at any time when Mr Brodsky is absent' (111). The futility of re-establishing Brodsky's authority is further demonstrated through the scene at the cinema where Pedersen confronts a group of local people who hold bleak views about the city's future. While Pedersen strives to boost their confidence in Brodsky and insists that '[e]verywhere, in the streets, in the trams, I sense a tremendous feeling, a feeling of optimism', these people respond by saying 'Brodsky, Brodsky. It's too late. We're done for now. Let's just be a cold modern city and be done with it' (107-8). The widespread pessimistic feelings among the local people, who realise the 'lateness' in rehabilitating Brodsky, demonstrate the general mistrust of the new forceful leadership and forecast the failure of the elite's scheme of retreating to the Soviet model of governance.

Section Three: Gospels from the West? The Citizens' Reliance on Ryder – Global Intervention and Partial Commitment

Unlike the upper class, who endeavour to rehabilitate Brodsky to restore the old model of governance, many of the people whom Ryder encounters from below place heavy reliance on Ryder, and consequently Ryder comes to stand in for an appetite for Westernisation after 1989. While the local elites and politicians downplay his importance at the concert, Ryder enjoys a high reputation among most citizens from below, and ‘the mood in this town has altered simply at the news of [Ryder’s] arrival’ (114). Almost everyone Ryder meets in the city expects him to take some time out of his schedule, with the hope that he might help with their private problems. Gustav, the ageing porter at the international hotel where Ryder stays, expects him to check on his daughter Sophie, who has been upset about certain difficult issues; Fiona, his childhood friend, wishes that Ryder could join her dinner party because his participation will give her great honour as well as impressing her friends; Hoffman, the hotel manager, pleads with Ryder to look at his wife’s album since she is a big fan. The triviality of these demands and the sheer quantity of them expose the citizens’ strong – even excessive – reliance on Ryder: they demonstrate how Ryder is seen as an authority who may give instructions to the locals on almost everything, which further symbolises the profound influence of the West on post-1989 East-Central Europe. The significant status of Ryder is also demonstrated in the scene at the cinema where people beg him to stay, and the mission of tearing down ‘HAL’ seems to lie symbolically on Ryder’s shoulders. Theo, the man whom Ryder meets at the cinema, ‘grasp[s] [his] sleeve’ and invites him to ‘take a quick poll here’ and ‘ask a few of the people’ at the cinema about their opinions (108). The freckled man pleads with Ryder to stay longer when he learns that Ryder is leaving: he begs, ‘please don’t go just yet. You must stay at least until the astronaut dismantles HAL’ (108). While in the film it is the American astronaut dismantling HAL, in reality, Ryder, as the embodiment of the newly arrived liberal force from the West, is expected to be the one to dismantle the totalitarian regime.

The marriage between Sophie and Ryder alludes to the intimate relationship between East-Central Europe and Western forces after 1989, and yet their dispute over ‘settling down’ and ‘travelling’ foregrounds the tension between East-Central

Europeans' expectations for firm commitment and the Western countries' partial engagement and insufficient support. In *The Unconsoled*, while Ryder appears to be simply an outsider to the city, it turns out that he has deeper connections with the local people than he has acknowledged. It becomes apparent that Sophie, Gustav's daughter, is not a stranger but Ryder's wife, and Boris, Sophie's son, is also Ryder's son. Being married implies an exclusive and total commitment – Sophie anticipates this, but Ryder fails to fulfil it. The name 'Ryder' sounds similar to 'riding,' which suggests mobility, instability and a low level of reliability. Complaining that Sophie 'live[s] in such a small world', Ryder constantly travels abroad and refuses to settle down in one single place (37). Unlike Ryder, Sophie seeks to find a house and live a stable life. She invites Ryder to check on the new house that she has searched out for their family and hopes that Ryder can stay there. As she says to Ryder, the house is 'the one we've been looking for all this time' – 'it sounds perfect. About half an hour's walk from the village, all by itself on a ridge, three storeys' (34). While Ryder's travelling implies that he is, at best, only partially committed to the locality, Sophie's invitation to Ryder to move into the house demonstrates her craving for stability and more serious commitments, and this represents an allegory of post-1989 East-Central Europeans' demands for more constant and sufficient support from the West. Sophie's dependence on Ryder is also related to their son Boris, who has been neglected by his father for a long time. Sophie accuses Ryder of failing to fulfil his duty as a 'real father'. Leading Boris away from him in agony, Sophie exclaims that 'he'll never be one of us': 'he'll never love you like a real father' (532). The absence of a father figure reflects how the post-communist countries lacked substantial assistance from their western counterparts, even though they claimed to be closely connected with them. The unstable and temporary global intervention, as represented by the 'travelling' husband and father Ryder, blights the prospect of establishing liberalism and cosmopolitanism.

The Unconsoled further exposes the insufficiency and ineffectiveness of international intervention by representing how Ryder constantly thinks about his parents back in England throughout his journey, which reveals that he always prioritises his own country over foreign ones. Throughout the journey, Ryder

frequently mentions his ‘tiredness’ and complains about the excessive pressure the city places on him. He is a person who is already overloaded: he says that ‘[travelling has] been very tiring. And even now, here in this city, there’s so much pressure on me’ (89). In contrast to his exhaustion in front of the citizens who await his involvement, Ryder has plenty of time for contemplating his childhood back in England. Ryder is especially comfortable and soothed when he stays in the hotel room because it resembles his aunt’s house ‘on the borders of England and Wales’ where he spent time with his parents (16). Ryder happily immerses himself in childhood memories of a time when he was still living with his parents. In this context, all the tensions of the day – ‘the long flight, the confusions over [his] schedule’ – fade away (17). Returning to Anthony Appiah, the real challenge to cosmopolitanism ‘isn’t the belief that other people don’t matter at all; it is the belief that they don’t matter very much’.⁴⁶ In Ryder’s mind, his parents mean much more to him than contacts in the foreign city. When Miss Stratmann reminds him of the Citizens’ Mutual Support Group that he is scheduled to meet, Ryder pays little attention and simply replies that ‘[i]t’s just that I was slightly concerned about the, er, the arrangements. That’s to say, for my parents’ (254). Ryder even fails to notice or consider those potentially dangerous requests: he absentmindedly answers ‘yes, yes, yes. It’s all very well thought out’ to Mr Hoffman and agrees to take bows at the concert only because he is desperate to change the topic and discuss ‘the matter of [his] parents’ (383). As it turns out, Ryder’s parents will come to the city and watch his performance on Thursday night, and Ryder’s anxiety increases as the day approaches. He eventually explodes when he is asked to meet the Citizens’ Mutual Support Group because this would mean that he would have no time to prepare for the recital and impress his parents. Ryder explicitly expresses his indifference to the city, exclaiming that ‘I do not care about this group of citizens!’: ‘if I am not able to practise, I will pack up and leave this city immediately, in the next hour!’ (342). By representing how his parents back in England remain Ryder’s main concern, the novel displays a bleak outlook for cosmopolitanism, foregrounding the

⁴⁶ Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, (New York: Norton, 2006), p. 153.

long-standing tension between national commitments and international ones, and questioning the effectiveness of international intervention in post-1989 East-Central Europe.

Despite Ryder's absentmindedness and only partial engagement, there are still moments that bear signs of cosmopolitanism when Ryder interferes in local affairs, adding a dissenting voice and disrupting the conservative local culture. For instance, at the banquet where he is invited to give a speech in support of Brodsky, Ryder conjures up two forms of self-introduction. One form is to present himself as a decent gentleman who is associated with such good qualities as 'meticulous attention to detail. Precision in performance. The tight control of dynamics' (136). The other, by contrast, is to present himself as a clumsy person who brings about change and disorder: '[c]ollapsing curtain rails. Poisoned rodents. Misprinted score sheets. Few of you, I trust, would readily associate my name with such phenomena' (136). When it is time to deliver the speech, Ryder eventually chooses the second version and utters the seemingly senseless phrases: 'Collapsing curtain rails! Poisoned rodents! Misprinted score sheets!' (145). Although Ryder is expected to boost people's faith in Brodsky at the banquet, he instead delivers his speech in a manner that conveys a strong sense of displacement and turbulence, which serves to expose the futility and absurdity in the elites' scheme to recreate a totalitarian leader. In the novel, Ryder not only disrupts the backward-looking tendencies among the elites but also carelessly exposes the citizens to the shortcomings of the conservative local culture. Ryder once goes to visit a local art gallery, and yet most of the people there ignore him; preoccupied with thoughts about his parents, Ryder has no intention to connect with them either, only wishing to leave the building as soon as possible. However, although he plans to leave without attracting others' attention, Ryder cannot find the exit. He accidentally opens the door of a cupboard which is filled beyond its capacity and makes a loud noise: 'several household mops came rumbling out and fell with a clatter onto the marble floor, scattering a dark fluffy substance in all directions' (278). The 'household mops' tumbling out of the cupboard and the scattered 'dark fluffy substance' represent how Ryder clumsily exposes the hidden and ignored problems in the city, which have been

carefully buried in the past. The sudden and noisy ‘clatter’ that he makes symbolises how Ryder manages to add a dissenting voice from the West, which catches the local people’s attention.

Ryder’s debate with Mr Christoff about music in the local café, which represents the encounter and clash between the Soviet past and the liberal present, helps the citizens on the social margins to remove the constraints of strict authoritarianism. Although Mr Christoff has lost his popularity among most of the citizens, he still has a few followers at the margins of society. Wishing that Ryder would help him regain popularity with the public, Christoff invites him to meet his followers in the local café and discuss modern music. Their debate is centred around one major question – ‘whether the pigmented triads have intrinsic emotional values regardless of context’ (197). Unlike Christoff, who believes that pigmented triads have a fixed and predetermined value, Ryder proposes that the pigmented triads’ emotional colour ‘can change significantly not only according to context but according to volume’ (197-198). Their divided opinions on music allude to a more general ideological divergence: while Christoff still believes in the ‘intrinsic emotional values’ of pigmented triads, which is linked with the rigid and highly standardised culture in the Soviet era, Ryder emphasises the significance of taking a flexible position and changing according to the specific context. Ryder’s speech soon wins the support of those in the café who realise that times have changed and are no longer willing to follow Christoff’s leadership. This illustrates how Ryder manages to eliminate the remaining impact of the Soviet past and liberate those on the social margins from the constraints of strict authoritarianism.

Ryder seeks refuge in loving childhood memories whenever he is asked to take extra responsibilities for the foreign city. However, it becomes increasingly clear that the loving images of his parents are not real; Ryder’s original family in England was full of tension and conflict, so it could not give him emotional support. The imperfection of Ryder’s English family acts as a metaphor for what Jean-Luc Nancy calls the ‘limits of community’, which suggests that one’s nation of origin may not be regarded as a place of wholeness and strength. In contrast to his positive memory,

Ryder is traumatised by his divided family. On the holiday that he spent in his aunt's house, Ryder heard his parents' fierce fight – there was 'a furious row' downstairs, and, even as a child of six or seven, Ryder 'had realised this to be no ordinary row' (16). The 'training sessions' that he created were not for the exercise of patience and self-control, but rather to 'fight off emotions' and resist the impulse to return to his unhappy family (171-72). Ryder's divided family in England gestures towards the limits of the nation as a total community, and how it fails to give its people sufficient support and emotional comfort. The imperfect English family also symbolises the division and the inner flaws in Western countries, which appeared to be perfect role models after the collapse of the Soviet Union but, as Ivan Krastev notes, were gradually demystified since they were equally 'beset by political stagnation, economic inefficiency, and social chaos'.⁴⁷ *The Unconsoled* demonstrates how realising and accepting the absence of 'wholeness' may facilitate the emergence of cosmopolitanism. Empathising with Ryder, Miss Collins, the lady whom he meets at the banquet, offers to help him out, saying 'I do quite honestly wish to be of some help to you' (146). Sensing his unspoken trauma, she is willing to listen to him 'with sympathy'. She promises, 'I won't idealise or sentimentalise you in the way a less experienced person might' (146). The fact that she won't 'idealise' or 'sentimentalise' Ryder suggests that Miss Collins has detected and is willing to accept his imperfection: Ryder is, for the first time, seen as neither superior nor inferior to the local people, and this hints at an intersubjective and mutually beneficial relationship between post-1989 East-Central Europe and the West.

Through the scene in which Ryder's music, which was once exclusively dedicated to his parents, ends up accompanying Mr Brodsky's burial of his dog Bruno, the novel raises the hope of cosmopolitanism by revealing how Ryder's concern for his parents may overlap, rather than conflict with, that for the foreign others. As the day of the performance approaches, Ryder is anxious at the thought that his parents are coming for his recital. Hiding alone in a 'little wooden hut' on the hill, he is

⁴⁷ Ivan Krastev, 'Eastern Europe's Illiberal Revolution The Long Road to Democratic Decline', *Foreign Affairs*, 97.3 (2018), 49-56 (p. 49).

desperate to escape the citizens' heavy demands and prepare for his performance (356). The sense of exclusion is conveyed both by the location of the hut, which is high up on the hill and away from the city centre, and by the extreme smallness of the place. The wall contains only one window, and an upright piano '[takes] up most of the space'; when Ryder pulls out the stool and sits down, his back 'virtually touch[es] the wall behind' (356). It is in such a private and enclosed place that Ryder feels soothed and relaxed. He strives to block out every noise from outside and lose himself in the rosy memory of his parents. With his 'eyes closed', Ryder imagines how his parents would be touched by the music; he also pictures their faces as they 'sit side by side, listening [to his music] with looks of solemn concentration' (356-8). However, Ryder soon becomes aware of 'a noise in the background': as it turns out, the noise is made by Mr Brodsky, who is not far away from the hut and burying his dog, Bruno. While the elites plan to erect a bronze statue of Bruno to recreate national myths, Brodsky's burial of the dog symbolises his disapproval of the plan and his departure from the Soviet past (358). In this scene, both Ryder and Brodsky suffer from melancholy and seek comfort: Ryder, who practices alone in the hut, takes refuge in the imagination and yet cannot find support from his English parents; Brodsky, who buries Bruno outside the hut, struggles to recover from the loss and resists being part of the myth-making project. Although the sources of their melancholy differ, *The Unconsoled* shows how the different melancholic feelings unexpectedly merge and Ryder and Brodsky manage to find emotional support in each other. Recollecting that Brodsky mentioned his intention of burying Bruno, Ryder has a vague memory of 'having agreed to some arrangement whereby [he] played the piano while [Brodsky] performed the burial ceremony' (358). Ryder's music, which was once privately dedicated to his parents, ends up accompanying Brodsky's burial of Bruno. The sadness of Ryder's music seems to have drifted through the air to Brodsky: accompanied by the music, Brodsky 'dragged the body of the dog across the tall grass and into the grave' (361). Ryder has also changed in the process. As he concludes the third movement, he hears 'Brodsky still hard at work'; Ryder recommences the third movement once more to accompany Brodsky, even lending 'a greater emphasis to the

elegiac nuances than he had previously' (361-2). The fact that Ryder's music ends up accompanying Brodsky's burial ceremony shows how the boundary between a private realm and a public one is blurred. It also suggests that individuals' concerns about their own countries (as illustrated by Ryder's performance for his parents and Brodsky's preoccupation with Bruno) may not be in conflict with concerns for the world but rather overlap with them.

Section Four: Suspicion and Resistance – The Desire for Self-Determination and the Rise of Nationalist Sentiment

Although Ryder's intervention in local affairs raises some hope of cosmopolitanism, his involvement is not always welcomed: the novel shows the rise of nationalist sentiments among the citizens who are anxious over their loss of identity and crave self-determination. Gustav, the ageing hotel porter, is one example. Gustav has been working at the international hotel for many years, but now he is increasingly aware that his job is not much appreciated. He complains that being a hotel porter is not, as people now assume, just an extension of 'carrying luggage from place to place'; experiencing an identity crisis, he puts extra effort into proving his value (6). Although Gustav, like the other citizens, respects and relies on Ryder, he is more inclined to prove to Ryder their independence and capacity for self-management. Gustav invites Ryder to the Hungarian cafe where most of the old porters gather together; in the Café, he makes strenuous efforts to perform 'the Porters' Dance' – the performance of juggling with heavy boxes. Although he suffers from total exhaustion, Gustav seeks to show Ryder his strength and endurance: he exclaims, 'come on, let's show Mr Ryder how we *really* enjoy ourselves! Let's show him how we do it!' (395). Another effort Gustav makes to prove his value is to continue holding the guests' suitcases even when they are in the elevator. When he is received by Gustav, Ryder observes that as they stand in the elevator, the old porter 'continue[s] to hold onto both the suitcases' despite the fact that he 'grows red with the effort' (5). Later, as Ryder chats with Miss Stratmann, Gustav still holds the suitcases, 'facing the opposite

corner of the elevator with his back to [them]’, despite the fact that ‘the weight of the suitcases was making his knees sag and his shoulders quiver’ (10). In this scene, the stillness of Gustav holding the suitcases contrasts sharply with the mobility of the elevator. This alludes to the disjunction between the East-Central European’s assertion of self-identity – as demonstrated by Gustav’s holding the suitcases – and the rapidly changing and increasingly globalised world, as represented by his standing together with Ryder in the moving elevator. Instead of seeking intervention from the West, Gustav struggles to demonstrate his ability to manage local affairs on his own, which reveals the rising nationalist sentiments among the local people.

Just like Gustav, Mr and Mrs Hoffman have a similar craving for self-assertion and independence. However, their unhappy marriage and habitual hospitality to Ryder reveal the tension between the desire to be liberated from external influences and the difficulty in breaking the long-established habit of over-reliance on outsiders. Throughout the marriage, Mr Hoffman has no confidence in his artistic talent and he constantly worries that his wife, who he believes has good artistic taste, will one day leave him. Mr Hoffman cannot forget the traumatic experience when Mrs Hoffman first visited his house and found that there was not even a piano in the room – ‘no piano, nothing. No manuscript paper, nothing’ (347). By contrast, he knows that Mrs Hoffman has been a consistent follower of foreign artists since their marriage: she invites Mr Fischer to the house and tells him about her passion for Baudelaire, and she also keeps albums of works by such artists as Kosminsky and Stefan Hallier (506). As Kundera notes, Central Europe was once ‘a great cultural centre’, but during the Soviet time its culture ‘bowed out’.⁴⁸ The fact that Mr Hoffman did not have a piano, nor the chance to practice music, alludes to the Sovietisation of Europe when East-Central Europeans sacrificed their local culture for standardization. Mrs Hoffman’s following of foreign artists, by contrast, represents how the local people habitually looked up to foreign cultures after the Soviet era since their own had ‘bowed out’. After Ryder comes to the city, Mr Hoffman, knowing that his wife has kept albums

⁴⁸ Kundera, ‘A Kidnapped West’, p. 106.

about Ryder and has been a big fan of his for years, pleads with Ryder to look at her albums. This is only one of the many efforts he has made to cater to his wife's taste. As Mr Hoffman tells Ryder, his wife 'has followed [Ryder's] career with close interest'; she is a 'very cultured woman' and '[n]aturally she's a great admirer of [Ryder]' (20). However, it turns out that the one-sided reliance on foreign others is not what Mrs Hoffman truly craves. Collecting Ryder's music does not make her more content: knowing that her husband shows her albums to Ryder, she fiercely asks for them back, exclaiming '[y]ou had no right! Give them to me' (506). Mr Hoffman's efforts to satisfy her taste do not make her happy: as she acknowledges, '[m]y husband tries very hard, tries to help me, but it's no use' (417). Deep down in her heart, Mrs Hoffman still seeks comfort from her husband rather than from outsiders. Recollecting that they 'were very close once' when their son Stephan was small, she admits that she 'still want[s] one day a warm and close family' (416).

The hospitality Mr and Mrs Hoffman show to Ryder is almost a local custom: Ryder is given much importance even when a group of mourners is mourning the deceased, but the nuance of the scene illustrates how their hospitality to outsiders is tinged with repressed discontent and resentment. Ryder comes across a group of mourners at the cemetery; a woman with immense distress is mourning her deceased husband. Although this is a highly private occasion, Ryder is invited to join the group. The brother of the widow tells Ryder that his sister will be delighted if he joins them; the widow, though immersed in deep grief, says that her deceased husband Hermann was 'a great admirer of [him]' and thus Ryder's attendance will be 'truly an honour' (366). The strangeness of the scene is shown by the fact that Ryder soon becomes the centre of attention for these people. Ryder is invited to sit at a 'marble tomb adjacent to her husband's grave': his 'adjacency' to her husband's grave suggests that Ryder, as an outsider, is almost of equal importance with the deceased, which is absurd at such a private occasion, and this reveals the hierarchical relationship between East-Central Europe and the West. Nonetheless, the novel underlines the mourners' ambiguous attitude to Ryder beneath their apparent respect for him. Gathering around Ryder, they treat him with the only food they have (a 'slice of cake' and 'a packet of peppermint')

and insist that Ryder should eat them together (368). The mismatch between the two types of food – one being soft and the other hard, one sweet and the other with a lingering cool flavour – illustrates their mixed feelings towards him, and the strange flavour of the two makes the treat almost like a punishment. A reversed power relationship is shown in the scene in which Ryder, who sits on the tomb, is surrounded by the group of mourners approaching him. A sense of pressure is conveyed by the mourners who ‘seem all to step forward and gather around’ Ryder; they are ‘steadily edging closer around [him]’, but when he looks up, they are all standing quite still with ‘eyes lowered respectfully’ (368). The mourners’ purported respect for Ryder is eventually transformed into explicitly expressed discontentment and resistance. Some people in the group ask ‘why’s he so special anyway? This is Hermann’s time’, and others protest, asking ‘what’s so special about him anyway? Interrupting everything’ (369-370). While these people tend to prioritise Ryder even over the deceased Hermann, they eventually emphasise the preciousness of their own time and resist treating him as a particularly important figure.

The scene in which a journalist and a photographer coax Ryder into taking pictures in front of the Sattler monument reflects the local people’s fear or even suspicion of cosmopolitanism. Paralleling Ryder’s enormous influence on the city with that of Sattler, they fear that the coming Western force will be a new Hitler or Stalin, who once brought disaster to the area. In the novel, Ryder is led by a journalist and a photographer to the hill where the Sattler monument stands. Although like all other citizens, the journalist and the photographer appear to show great respect to Ryder, they secretly harbour resentment towards him. On the way to the monument, they call Ryder ‘the fool’ and ‘the shit’ behind his back (180). In particular, they do not seem to believe that Ryder should enjoy such superior status, nor do they think that he deserves an excessively high reputation among the local people. They cynically remark that one should ‘remember, like all these types, he’s very vain’ (166); to coax him to the monument, they ‘pretend to be a big fan of his’, one saying to the other ‘you just have to keep up the flattery. So all the time you snap, keep shouting “great”’ (166-167). Their cynical remarks on Ryder and the way that they pretend to

be ‘a big fan of his’ reveal the repressed resentment against Ryder beneath their apparent modesty and politeness. Throughout the journey, the journalist and the photographer are careful not to let Ryder know the Sattler monument’s notorious reputation. As it turns out, their secret plan is to present Ryder as an authoritarian figure resembling Sattler – the figure whom the citizens abhor. Asking Ryder to stand in front of the Sattler monument, the photographer tells Ryder to raise his hand as though he is ‘ushering someone towards the building’ (182). Ryder’s picture soon appears in the local newspaper and is circulated among the citizens. As Ryder later reads:

‘More puzzlingly, my features bore an expression of unbridled ferocity. My fist was raised to the wind, and I appeared to be in the midst of producing some warrior-like roar. I could not for the life of me understand how such a pose had come about. The headline - there was no other text at all on the front page - proclaimed: ‘RYDER’S RALLYING CALL’ (267).

Ryder’s ferocious image, as it is presented in the newspaper, is reminiscent of Sattler, and this hints at the fact that Ryder, who enjoys a privileged status, might be a new authoritarian in the locality. Comparing Ryder’s excessively high status with that of Sattler, the citizens suspect that Ryder will also end up an authoritarian and bring the city disaster. Seeing the newspaper, they no longer trust Ryder. People at the art gallery all ignore him (269-270); the mourners in the cemetery hold ‘the most intense hatred’ towards Ryder – as one of them exclaims, ‘[s]tanding in front of the Sattler monument! Smiling like that!’ (370). Ryder’s picture conjures up the image of Sattler who brought disaster on the city. The capitalised headline – ‘RYDER’S RALLYING CALL’ – is like a reminder of the Soviet past, and this radically undermines the local people’s faith in a cosmopolitan future.

Section Five: The Final Performances at the Local Concert – A Future Unknown

As I have shown above, in the fictional East-Central European city, there are divergent trends and people hold conflicting views about the city’s future. The hope

for ending the chaos and confusion seems to lie in the city's most important event: the concert. But the concert, which was designed to engineer Mr Brodsky's popularity, almost confirms the impossibility of recreating an authoritarian figure, and this is foretold by the audience's reaction to the bald man's poem dedicated to Brodsky. Before Mr Brodsky shows up on stage, a bald man recites a self-composed poem in honour of him, which is called 'Brodsky the Conqueror' (486). The earlier stanzas 'draw comparisons between Brodsky and a variety of mythical heroes'; by contrast, the later ones abandon the mythical aspect, 'focusing instead on actual incidents involving Brodsky from the recent past – incidents which ... passed into local legend' (486). Although in the beginning, the audience listens to the bald man's poem in a relatively respectful manner, the people gradually lose patience and detect lies when the later stanzas are linked with real and familiar contexts. A reference to 'the bus-shelter tragedy' sets off 'some tittering'; the tittering grows more widespread at the mention of Brodsky, 'outnumbered and battle-worn', being 'forced finally to surrender, behind the telephone booth' (486-7). When the bald man speaks of 'a glittering show of valour on the school outing', the entire hall finally 'erupt[s] into laughter' (487). The phrases 'bus-shelter tragedy' and 'valour on the school outing' clearly indicate the triviality of Brodsky's achievement. While the audience is still in awe of Brodsky when he is likened to distant and mythical heroes, the myths surrounding him are debunked as people learn more about the detail and re-evaluate his reputation in a concrete and familiar context. The poem does nothing to boost people's faith in a new authoritarian figure: while before the concert, the public's contempt for Brodsky was mostly an underlying trend in society, the audience's 'tittering' and 'laughing' at the concert – which is the most important public event in the city – is an overt and collective expression of social discontent.

However, despite the widespread mistrust of the old system, the local people are not prepared to accept something radically different. This is shown by the audience's abhorrence of Brodsky's unconventional performance when he attempts an innovative expression of art on stage. After the bald man's poetry recitation, Mr Brodsky eventually shows up, stepping on the podium and conducting the orchestra. Holding a

‘shabby ironing board’ as his crutch, Brodsky is still troubled by the wound in his leg (488). Nonetheless, as when he buried his dog Bruno, Brodsky wishes to make changes and move on from the past. On stage, Brodsky ignores ‘the outer structure of the music’ and instead focuses on ‘the peculiar life-forms hiding just under the shell’ (492). Infusing passion in his conducting, he raises his baton in the air, ‘sway[ing] his torso’ and ‘swing[ing] both arms through the air with abandon’ (492). Brodsky, here, explores an innovative form of artistic expression, which symbolises his endeavour to be liberated from the Soviet past and absorb current liberal ideas. He abandons the formalist understanding of music and instead develops a freer style, which reflects Ryder’s earlier comments on pigmented triads that have ‘no intrinsic emotional properties’ (197-198). However, although they appreciate Brodsky’s performance at the beginning, the people in the audience now ‘exchange worried looks, coughing uneasily, shaking their heads’ (494). Over time, the musicians wear ‘expressions of incredulity, distress, even disgust’ (494). Desperate to display his ability and yet not having recovered from the wound, Brodsky eventually crashes down at the front of the stage. Nobody ‘rush[es] to his aid’: ‘the gasp that greeted his fall faded into an embarrassed silence’ (496). As it turns out, although prior to the concert most citizens had lost confidence in the old system, the prospect of making profound social changes intimidates the public. People’s disapproval of Brodsky’s innovative musical expression reflects the gloomy prospects for cosmopolitanism: although the authoritarian regime is too corrupt to stand, incorporating new elements and establishing a different one still lack mass support.

Notably, Ryder, who is supposed to be the most anticipated and respected performer, does not make his public appearance at all. Helping the wounded Brodsky to return backstage, Ryder is surprised to ‘find the auditorium quite transformed’ when he comes back: ‘as much as two-thirds of the guests had left, and of those remaining most were standing about talking in the aisles’ (501). Hoping that his speech may change the audience’s opinion of Brodsky, Ryder says to Hoffman, ‘I have yet to make my appearance. I assure you I’ll do whatever is in my power to bring the evening back into control’ (503). However, Hoffman simply changes the

topic, and Ryder never has the chance to make his speech in front of the public. When it is time for Ryder's piano performance, no audience is present: 'not only was the audience absent in its entirety, all the seating had vanished as well' (519). Sitting at the piano on stage, Ryder alone confronts the 'vast, dark, empty place' (519). Ryder's absence and his minimum influence at the concert suggest that the Western forces, despite starting to gain popularity from below, remain unaccepted, and even blocked, at the level of public and political discourses.

The city's hope for cosmopolitanism rests on the younger generation pianist, Stephan Hoffman, the son of Mr and Mrs Hoffman. Stephan's mastery of the piano shows signs of both originality and creativity and has already reached a relatively high level. When Ryder earlier listened to Stephan playing, he discerned an 'imagination of originality and emotional subtlety' that quite surprised him – 'the young man's reading of Kazan seemed to present certain dimensions never glimpsed in the great majority of interpretations' (150-151). At the local concert, Stephan is the first to play and he gives an excellent piano performance. However, he can neither win his parents' approval (since they leave in the middle of his performance) nor gain much attention from other members of the audience (481-2). Disappointed with these people, Stephan is impressed by Brodsky's courageous performance on stage, and by the power of the new music. As Stephan later acknowledges to Ryder, 'that performance Mr Brodsky gave tonight, in my opinion, was the finest thing that's been heard in this concert hall for many many years' (522). Stephan also correctly notes that the citizens do not want anything extreme or audacious: as he points out, 'they didn't want it, it startled them'; 'they're very relieved [Brodsky] collapsed like that' (522). The rejection of the 'extreme' forms of music demonstrates the local people's fearful refusal to reflect on history and their reluctance to reach out to the world, but Brodsky's unconventional performance plants the seeds of cosmopolitanism in the mind of Stephan. Stephan decides to travel outside the city, to 'go somewhere bigger, study under someone like Lubetkin or Peruzzi' (520). He realises that he is not measured by real standards here: his parents have 'the highest standards', and yet other locals 'don't know so much about [music and art]' (520). Stephan's decision to

travel in the world hints at the birth of cosmopolitan consciousness among the younger generation, whose members are determined to bridge the gap between the local and global, possessing both the desire and the courage to imagine the world.

Conclusion

As an allegory of post-1989 East-Central Europe, *The Unconsoled* demonstrates the complexity of the new cosmopolitanism that was expected to emerge after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The novel shows that 1989 does not herald an easy or smooth transition towards cosmopolitanism; importantly, it underlines the fact that envisioning new cosmopolitanism does not entail a universal acceptance of Western values. In the fictional East-Central European city, the influence of the communist past intertwines and overlaps with that of the Westernised present. There are divergent trends in the city: some people are nostalgic about the communist past and seek to re-elect an authoritarian leader; others place much hope in Ryder, who represents the newly arrived Western force; some, in contrast, express growing nationalist sentiments, being suspicious of foreign intervention and craving self-determination. All these positions illuminate the complexity of cosmopolitanism at the threshold of a new age.

Despite the complexity, one salient feature of the fictional post-1989 European city is the division between the local elites/politicians and the general public regarding their attitudes towards authoritarianism and the communist regime. Regardless of its slight chances of success, the ‘decision-makers’ of the city seem to unanimously support the restoration of an authoritarian regime. They seek to create a new heroic figure in Brodsky and endeavour to engineer his popularity among the public. Contrarily, although the citizens hold divergent views about the city’s future, there appears to be a broad consensus that they do not expect a new authoritarian leader. The conflict between the elites/politicians and the general public serves to expose the ‘cultural lag’ that exists at an institutional level: the trend towards change and openness may first be detected from the bottom of society, whereas the upper class

may be more inclined to maintain the old system. This insight – that cosmopolitanism may first emerge from below – leads neatly on to the following chapter on Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*, which considers how in the globalised context marginalised and underprivileged people contribute to vernacular cosmopolitanism.

Although the upper class seeks to return to the communist past, *The Unconsoled* clearly reveals the fruitlessness of such an endeavour. It is firstly shown by the feebleness of Brodsky – which symbolises the decayed nature of the old system – and by the death of his dog, Bruno. The collective witnessing of social change and revolution is another main reason why post-1989 East-Central Europeans will not return to the communist past. In *The Unconsoled*, the citizens have already witnessed the death of Bruno before the concert, and the menace of the dog is revealed to, and spread among, the public. Furthermore, although the concert was designed to engineer Brodsky's popularity, Brodsky's public appearance actually deepens the citizens' mistrust of him and accelerates his collapse. The novel shows that returning to the communist past is impossible, and this makes the cosmopolitan transition – learning from the West and incorporating new elements from the world – a sensible choice for post-1989 East-Central Europeans.

Nonetheless, the novel foregrounds the difficulties and challenges in the process of opening up to the West, which adds complexity to envisioning a new cosmopolitanism. *The Unconsoled* shows that some citizens tend to overly rely on the Western forces: they seem to romanticise the image of foreign others and neglect the importance of regional autonomy. The danger in an over-reliance on the West is evident especially when Ryder is only absentmindedly and partially engaged in local affairs. In contrast, some citizens express growing nationalist sentiments and are increasingly suspicious about global intervention. This is related to the Soviet past, which was also a form of 'internationalism'; it also concerns the Westernised present, which will not necessarily bring the city happiness and prosperity. To what extent should a foreign other be relied on? In the new context of globalisation, will people necessarily choose to open up? These questions are not fully answered in *The Unconsoled*, and they will be further explored in the next chapter on *On Beauty*.

Encountering Strangers: Glocal Cohabitation and Vernacular Cosmopolitanism in Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*

Introduction

With the publication of her debut novel *White Teeth* (2000), Zadie Smith was acknowledged as a postcolonial writer for her focus on ethnic minorities and cultural hybridity, and her writings were initially praised for the celebration of multiculturalism. However, Smith is unhappy about being categorised as a postcolonial writer since she cares about 'people' on a larger scale. As she states, she is 'much more interested in the way people behave to each other, their *personal* ethics [...] of course, race is a difference, but it's a small difference' (emphasis added).¹ Smith's concerns about 'people', rather than just those from particular backgrounds, make her writings easy to read from cosmopolitan perspectives. Notably, the optimism in *White Teeth* – where the fictional London has the potential to be a 'Happy Multicultural Land' – is impossible to sustain after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.² Smith's later work, such as *On Beauty* (2005), is endowed with more critical visions, and it becomes a suitable text to examine critical cosmopolitanism as it foregrounds both the challenges and opportunities that arise in the current condition of globalisation – to be specific, the condition of glocalisation. As Dorothy Hales notes, unlike philosophical work that describes 'the felt experience of cognition', novels, such as *On Beauty*, make unique contributions to imagining the alterity: *On Beauty* manages to portray 'the particularity and contingency' of each individual's experience and highlight the power relations and social alliances through socially diverse characters and their individual attempts.³

We are now living in an increasingly 'glocalised' world, to quote Roland

¹ Zadie Smith, 'Generation Why?' nybooks.com. *New York Review of Books*, 25 Nov. 2010. Web.

² Smith, *White Teeth*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2000)

³ Dorothy Hale, 'On Beauty as Beautiful?: The Problem of Novelistic Aesthetics by Way of Zadie Smith', *Contemporary Literature* 53.4 (2012), pp. 814-844, p.815.

Robertson, where the local and the global are interconnected rather than being separated from each other.⁴ The fact that the local is essentially included within the global, a phenomenon especially prominent in big cities, means that people have more opportunities to encounter those previously unknown ‘strangers’ who once lived far away and now share the same local sphere. Whereas in the past, meeting cultural others was exclusively the privilege of elite travellers, Ash Amin notes that streets, squares and markets in the age of glocalisation are all ‘micro-publics of everyday social contact and encounter’ where cross-cultural interactions take place.⁵ In particular, Amin says that in public spaces, ‘strangers can play out their differences, inhabit many networks of communication and affiliation’.⁶ The easier and more frequent cross-border encounters in the glocalised space – a site of ‘throwntogetherness’ in Doreen Massey’s words – potentially give rise to what Homi Bhabha terms ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’. Vernacular cosmopolitanism, in Bhabha’s theory, refers to a critical and oppositional vision and practice of cosmopolitanism that centres around the experience of disempowered, marginalised people and which thrives at the margin of society.⁷ Focusing on the role played by marginalised and dispossessed people in the glocalised sphere, Bhabha highlights the significance of both ‘domesticity’ and day-to-day ‘performance’ in envisioning vernacular cosmopolitanism. As he notes, ‘the “vernacular” shares an etymological root with the “domestic”’, which means that vernacular cosmopolitanism is always rooted in locality; importantly, adding to the idea of rootedness is ‘the process, ... the performance of translation, the desire to make a dialect’.⁸ Bhabha foregrounds the everyday experience of those who occupy a minority position within the culture to

⁴ Roland Robertson, ‘Glocalization’, *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, (2018), 1-8.

⁵ Ash Amin, *Land of Strangers*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), p. 63.

⁶ Amin, *Land of Strangers*, p. 63.

⁷ Doreen Massey, *For Space*, (London: Sage, 2005).

⁸ Homi Bhabha, ‘Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism’, in *Text and Nation: Cross-disciplinary Essays on Cultural and National Identities*, ed. by García-Moreno, Laura, and Peter C. Pfeiffer (New York: Camden House, 1996), pp. 191-207, p. 197.

which they have migrated and who must forge an identity by translating between cultures. As he maintains, it is ‘in the ordinariness of the day to day, in the intimacy of the indigenous’ that, unexpectedly, ‘we become strangers to ourselves’ in the very act of assuming a more worldly, or what is termed ‘global’, responsibility.⁹

Capturing the complexity of cross-cultural and cross-national encounters in the post-11 September United States, Zadie Smith’s *On Beauty* foregrounds both the challenges and possibilities of ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’ envisioned by Homi Bhabha. Smith’s *On Beauty* updates E.M. Forster’s *Howards End* (1910), with its instruction to ‘only connect’ across gender and class lines in early twentieth-century Britain. It is set in Wellington, a college town in Boston, at the turn of the twenty-first century, and it revolves around the lives of the members of an upper-middle-class British/American family: Howard Belsey, a white and British art history professor; Kiki Belsey, Howard’s African-American wife; and their three children Jerome, Zora, and Levi. Although many events take place in the fictional Wellington College, which imbues *On Beauty* with elements of a campus novel, Zadie Smith widens the scope by connecting the College’s ivory tower of discontent with the wider real world. The expanded thematic concern is mainly illustrated through the Belsey family’s encounters and interactions with those underprivileged people outside the campus – people such as the Haitian immigrants and Carl Thomas, a black American rapper and ‘street poet’. The two polarised groups of people who once barely knew each other now have more chances to encounter and interact with each other in the context of glocal cohabitation. In the novel, Monique the Haitian maid and Pierre the driver enter the Belsey home; a Haitian seller converses and interacts with Kiki at the market; Chouchou, the Haitian immigrant, develops a friendship with Levi on the street; and Carl the rapper has the chance to study at Wellington College with the help of Zora. In this chapter, I will focus on Zadie Smith’s representation of the marginalised and dispossessed people – as represented by the Haitian immigrants and Carl Thomas – and examine the feasibility of vernacular cosmopolitanism. I will contend that *On*

⁹ Bhabha, ‘Unsatisfied’, p. 197.

Beauty exposes both the challenges and possibilities of vernacular cosmopolitanism. The expected frequent cross-border encounters and interactions do not necessarily give rise to global consciousness but possibly engender greater nationalist sentiment. In particular, the underprivileged peoples' continued suffering from racial discrimination and economic exploitation in the glocal space makes it difficult for them to establish cross-boundary connections, and their oscillation between nationalist sentiment and global consciousness brings concrete historical and economic disparities to light.

This chapter is divided into sections according to the different types of encounters and interactions between the dispossessed people and privileged individuals in *On Beauty*. I first explore the connection between the 'silent encounter' – which I define as the encounter before any verbal communication takes place – and vernacular cosmopolitanism. Encounter is always 'embodied' since a person's physical traits are always the first thing to be noticed. Sara Ahmed notes that difference is found in the body and is established as a relation between bodies: this suggests that 'the particular bodies carry traces of the differences that are registered in the bodies of others'.¹⁰ In *On Beauty*, before verbal communications start, the Haitian immigrants and Carl have already been gazed upon and even been associated with such negative meanings as 'danger' and 'threat' because of their clothes or skin colour. Those negative associations, which indicate persistent racial and cultural prejudices, become the obstacles to cosmopolitanism. Following that, I focus on the 'fleeting' encounters that take place in public space, such as that between the Haitian seller and Kiki at the marketplace. As Amin observes, city streets are spaces of transit that produce little actual exchange between passing strangers.¹¹ The transience of cross-border encounters challenges an over-optimistic view of cosmopolitanism. Nonetheless, the novel also illustrates moments of enlightenment during transient encounters, and those enlightening moments sow the seeds for further meaningful and more lasting

¹⁰ Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 44.

¹¹ Amin, *Land of Strangers*, p. 6.

cross-border interactions. The subsequent sections concern accumulated encounters in the glocal sphere. The friendships between Chouchou and Levi, and Carl and Zora, demonstrate the possibility of establishing more intimate cross-border connections, and yet their interactions also expose the challenges to vernacular cosmopolitanism. For instance, Ulf Hannerz notes that the exile is rarely cosmopolitan because 'his involvement with a culture away from his homeland is something that has been forced on him'.¹² In *On Beauty*, Chouchou finds it hard to be cosmopolitan: he holds grudges against the United States because he has been forced to leave Haiti, his home country, which has been under severe economic and cultural exploitation. The last section on the experience of Carl transfers attention from the street to the Wellington campus. The street poet Carl's entrance into Wellington College manages to bring different racial and class inflexions and he challenges the conventions of the academy. Yet, his strong sense of non-belonging and factual marginalisation at the College expose the gap between theoretical and vernacular cosmopolitanism. Carl's growing distance from other underprivileged people reveals his departure from the cosmopolitan spirit when he begins to see himself as a member of the privileged group.

Literature Review: Marginalised People, Glocal Encounters, and Vernacular Cosmopolitanism

Who can be cosmopolitan? While in the past, it was believed that only the elites and the upper class could develop a global vision, recent critics have increasingly noted the cosmopolitan potential of marginalised and dispossessed people in an age of global migration and conviviality. Back in the eighteenth century, a decent education and the ability to travel around the world were regarded as two advantages possessed exclusively by the elites, and these qualities were believed to be crucial for the cultivation of a cosmopolitan consciousness.¹³ However, the belief that

¹² Ulf Hannerz, 'Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture', *Theory Culture Society*, 7 (1990), 237-51, (p. 238).

¹³ David Adams and Galin Tihanov, *Enlightenment Cosmopolitanism*, (Abingdon: Legenda, 2011).

cosmopolitanism can only be developed from above has now been challenged, since geographical mobility is no longer the privilege of the elites and the condition of glocal conviviality enables disempowered people also to encounter and interact with cultural others. Reflecting on the status of companion servants, guides and migrant labourers, James Clifford argues that ‘the project of comparing and translating different travelling cultures need not be class- or ethno-centric’.¹⁴ As Clifford notes, contrary to common belief, cultures at the margin have always been ‘travelling’: they are in an endless process of transformation and adaptation, and this leads to what he terms ‘discrepant’ cosmopolitanism.¹⁵ Similarly, Stuart Hall refers to ‘cosmopolitans from below’, such as those driven by civil war and famine, in search of economic benefits, compelled to make a life in another place. As Hall maintains, although these people are ‘living a global life’ by *necessity*, their understanding is just as complex as that of global entrepreneurs; they, too, live their lives ‘in translation’ and are capable of ‘acquir[ing] the same cosmopolitan skills of adaptation and innovation’.¹⁶

Similarly, Homi Bhabha concentrates on the experience of marginalised and dispossessed people in his notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism. Importantly, he also highlights the significance of rootedness and everyday performances in the locality, seeking to join the contradictory notions of local specificity and universal ideals. In ‘Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism’, Bhabha defines vernacular cosmopolitanism as ‘a form of marginal or partial interpellation that opens up a space occupied by those who seek to establish an ethic of community’.¹⁷ Bhabha singles out three features of vernacular cosmopolitanism: firstly, it stops short of transcendent human universality; secondly, it is conscious of the insufficiency of the self and the imperative of openness to the needs of others; thirdly, it finds in ‘the victim of

¹⁴ James Clifford, ‘Traveling Cultures’, *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula A. Treichler, with Linda Baughman, (New York: Routledge, 1992), 96-116 (p. 107).

¹⁵ Clifford, ‘Traveling Cultures’, p. 107.

¹⁶ Stuart Hall and Pnina Werbner, ‘Cosmopolitanism, Globalisation and Diaspora’, in *Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism*, (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 345-360, p. 347.

¹⁷ Bhabha, ‘Unsatisfied’, p. 43.

progress' the best promise for moral regeneration.¹⁸ Stressing the importance of decentralisation and flexibility, Bhabha's vernacular cosmopolitanism is not an all-encompassing project dictated from above but rather one that arises from below through day-to-day cross-border interactions. As Bhabha notes, vernacular cosmopolitanism is a performance of translation and a dialectic process: it emerges from 'the ordinariness of the day to day' and 'the intimacy of the indigenous'.¹⁹ Focusing on the everyday experience of those who occupy a minority position in society and seek to forge an identity by translating between cultures, Bhabha argues that it is in the dynamic process that they manage to balance the commitments to 'the specificity of the event' and 'a trans-historical memory and solidarity' and even start to develop a cosmopolitan consciousness in the very act of assuming a worldly responsibility.²⁰ Vernacular cosmopolitanism, in other words, is inseparable from the distinct culture and unique history in the local sphere, yet rootedness does not negate openness: it is in the everyday cross-border encounters and interactions within the locality that the boundary between the local and global gets blurred and cosmopolitanism begins to emerge.

Everyday cross-border interactions, which are particularly facilitated by the current condition of glocal cohabitation, are at the centre of vernacular cosmopolitanism. However, it is important to note that such interactions are not entirely personal or only about the here and now: hidden forces such as discrepant histories, economics, and social positions are all at work in them too. Highlighting the advantage of glocal coexistence, Zygmunt Bauman observes that people now have opportunities to form 'personal' connections with strangers through daily interactions, and this paves the way for cosmopolitanism since it renders invalid the 'interchangeable, stereotyped specimens of an abstract category' such as that of nationality or ethnicity.²¹ Nonetheless, Sara Ahmed warns that cross-border

¹⁸ Bhabha, 'Unsatisfied', pp. 38-52.

¹⁹ Bhabha, 'Unsatisfied', p. 44.

²⁰ Bhabha, 'Unsatisfied', p. 40.

²¹ Zygmunt Bauman, 'Glocalization and Hybridity', *Glocalism: Journal of Culture*,

interactions, despite being direct and more frequent in the glocal sphere, are not completely personal or simply about the face to face. As Ahmed says, ‘there are always other encounters, other speech acts, scars and traumas, that remain unspoken, unvoiced, or not fully spoken or voiced’.²² For instance, the continued legacy of imperialist history or economic inequality may all have pre-dated face-to-face interactions, and these complex concerns tend to impede the establishment of cross-border connections. Noting the existence of these invisible forces, Marion Young stresses that cross-border communication is not reciprocal but rather fundamentally ‘asymmetrical’.²³ As Young argues, ‘each participant in a communication situation is distinguished by a particular history and social position that makes their relation asymmetrical’ – thus it is important to note the hierarchical relationship between different participants and be aware of the substantial gap in sharing and receiving information in the process of cross-border contacts.²⁴ In *On Beauty*, the silence, reluctance to speak, and awkwardness of the Haitian immigrants and Carl Thomas during their interactions with more privileged individuals all demonstrate the existence of such hidden factors that go beyond the personal level.

The fact that encounters are not simply between ‘individuals’ adds complexity to vernacular cosmopolitanism, and such complexity, in particular, is demonstrated through the different modes of cross-border interactions – such as the silent and fleeting ones in the glocal space – which I will explore in this chapter. As Ahmed observes, encounters are always ‘embodied’; thus, silent encounters that are based on the observation of a stranger’s physical traits often take place before verbal communication.²⁵ However, the meaning of the ‘body’ is not neutral: certain physical features – such as skin colour and clothes – have throughout history been unjustly associated with negative qualities. Such silent encounters are linked with racial and

Politics and Innovation, (2013), 1-5 (p. 3).

²² Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, p. 156.

²³ Marion Iris Young, ‘Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Thought’, *Constellations*, 3.3 (1997), 340-363.

²⁴ Young, ‘Asymmetrical Reciprocity’, p. 341.

²⁵ Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, pp. 44-51.

cultural prejudices, and they further strengthen these prejudices, which blocks the establishment of meaningful connections. In *On Beauty*, for example, the impoverished Haitian seller – who has ‘bloodshot eyes’ in Kiki’s view – is deemed sexually threatening even before any verbal communication takes place: this demonstrates people’s tendency to rely on a quickfire sensory/affective evaluation of bodily performances as racially/culturally meaningful.²⁶ Furthermore, such matters as how a stranger uses language are also foregrounded during face-to-face communications in the glocal sphere. As Vince Marotta notes, physical closeness does not mean the elimination of social and cultural distances: ‘one can be physically close to certain individuals or groups while feeling socially and culturally distant from them’.²⁷ In particular, Marotta mentions that ‘social proximity is maintained through a language of membership’, and the sense of belonging is largely dependent on ‘how fluent one is in the common language of particular organisations, clubs and groups’.²⁸ In *On Beauty*, the use of language is foregrounded during the encounters between the marginalised people and the privileged ones. For example, Howard secretly despises those who cannot speak fluent and accurate English, and he sees the songs played by Pierre, the Haitian driver, as nothing more than ‘men screaming at each other’ (25). Outsiders who do not possess sufficient linguistic resourcefulness may find it hard to be incorporated into the host country. However, outsiders can, of course, respond creatively to this situation: in the novel, Chouchou’s skilful use of English in the street indicates that disempowered people who live at the bottom of society have adopted useful communicative strategies and thus contribute to vernacular cosmopolitanism. They may have more chances to meet people from diverse backgrounds and better adapt themselves to the glocal culture.

The dynamics in the glocal sphere and the complexity of cross-border interactions have been further investigated by Gill Valentine, who warns against romanticising

²⁶ Zadie Smith, *On Beauty* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 46. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

²⁷ Vince Marotta, *Theories of the Stranger: Debates on Cosmopolitanism, Identity and Cross-cultural Encounters*, (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 15.

²⁸ Marotta, *Theories of the Stranger*, p. 24.

vernacular cosmopolitanism. Valentine notes that for all the potential to enhance mutual understanding, cross-border encounters in glocal space may also trigger defensive feelings and even give rise to conflict and resentment.²⁹ As Valentine states, contact with any manifestation of difference – whether it is in the neighbourhood or elsewhere – ‘can breed frustration and generate different scales of resentment, from rudeness in one-to-one situations to the threat of vigilante action’.³⁰ Cross-border interactions, in other words, may give rise to both nationalism and cosmopolitanism: notably, nationalist sentiments could be even more likely to arise among the marginalised people who are forced to leave their homeland and suffer unfair treatment and exploitation in the host country. Valentine further distinguishes between random encounters and meaningful interactions. She stresses that not every cross-cultural contact should be regarded as what she terms ‘meaningful contact’, by which she means contact that ‘changes values and translates beyond the specifics of the individual moment into a more general positive respect for – rather than merely tolerance of – others’.³¹ To apply Valentine’s insight here, some cross-border interactions in *On Beauty* may not be perceived as ‘meaningful’: they are either too transient to generate profound exchanges or else they are characterised by pretentious politeness rather than a genuine understanding of and respect for a cultural other. In contrast, Helen Wilson contests that equating ‘meaning’ with only ‘positive experiences’ overlooks the ‘different ways in which encounter comes to matter’, and she emphasises how even negative feelings or conflicts may sow the seeds of cosmopolitanism.³² In addition, it is important to note that ‘encounters accumulate’ and ‘gradually shift relations and behaviours over time’.³³ The transient cross-border encounters may lead to more profound and meaningful exchanges in the future. The complexity of the different modes of glocal interactions mentioned above will be

²⁹ Gill Valentine, ‘Living with Difference: Reflections on Geographies of Encounter’, *Progress in Human Geography*, 32.3 (2008), 323-337.

³⁰ Valentine, ‘Living with Difference’, p. 328.

³¹ Valentine, ‘Living with Difference’, p. 325.

³² Helen F Wilson, ‘On Geography and Encounter: Bodies, Borders, and Difference’, *Progress in Human Geography*, 41.4 (2017), 451-471 (p. 461).

³³ Wilson, ‘On Geography and Encounter’, p. 463.

explored in the following analysis of Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*.

Section One: Stereotypes, Silent Encounters and Vernacular Cosmopolitanism

The initial meetings between the Haitians, such as Pierre and Monique, and Howard's family in *On Beauty* demonstrate that cross-border encounters are always embodied – the disempowered tend to be the silenced ones who are observed and judged by the privileged people. In the novel, Monique is the Haitian housemaid newly hired by Howard's family. Yet when depicting Monique's second visit to the house, Zadie Smith narrates events almost entirely from the perspective of Kiki, the hostess, which shows that the underprivileged Haitian is the one being gazed at and judged during the cross-border encounter. From Kiki's perspective, Monique is a black 'squat Haitian woman' who wears 'a look of apologetic apprehension, sorry for what would go wrong even before it [has] gone wrong' (10). Even without spoken words, Kiki's assumptions about Monique – as a docile and submissive person – are already formed. Likewise, Pierre – the Haitian driver who comes to the house because of 'Howard's unwillingness to drive a car' – is portrayed as a silent person when he first appears in the text (24). As Howard comes out of the house, 'A familiar, grinning face was there on the other side, turned ashen in the cold'; only afterwards does Smith inform us that this 'Haitian fellow' is 'called Pierre' (24). The fact that Pierre's face is described before his name is stated reveals how the cross-border encounter is always embodied, and the silent encounter takes place before verbal communication. Being observed and examined by others, Pierre, who is patiently waiting for Howard and 'grinning' despite the cold weather, is seen as a submissive and good-natured person. In her study of *On Beauty*, Regine Jackson criticises Smith's representations of the Haitians as being 'one-dimensional', and she notes that they often have 'little dialogue' and almost 'no interior to speak of'.³⁴ By contrast, I argue that the one-dimensional image

³⁴ Regine Jackson, 'Imagining Boston: Haitian Immigrants and Place in Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*', *Journal of American Studies*, 46.4 (2012), 855-873 (p. 871).

of the Haitians – who tend to be portrayed as silent, docile and over-cautious, especially during the first few encounters – signals Smith’s consciousness that the disempowered people are deprived of speech and unfairly judged by their facial expressions or body gestures even before verbal communication, which may reinforce stereotypical impressions and even block the way for the establishment of further connections.

The way Kiki relates to Monique, and Howard relates to Pierre, reveals that the Haitians are secretly regarded as an inferior other; it demonstrates the hierarchical relationship between the dispossessed and the privileged people during the silent encounter. In their first meeting, Kiki cautiously avoids identifying herself with Monique. Kiki tends to display her superiority in front of her, both consciously and unconsciously. As Monique enters the house, Kiki quickly ‘strip[s]’ her voice ‘of its Florida music’ – the music from her hometown that serves as the reminder of Kiki’s own ‘blackness’; asserting her superior status, Kiki puts on ‘a quite different formal voice’ while extending her greetings to Monique (10). Stressing that the study to be cleaned is ‘her’ study, rather than Howard’s, Kiki takes pride in being an educated woman, and yet the underlying message is that Monique, the housemaid who does the cleaning, is inferior to her (11). The hierarchy of power is also illustrated through the encounter between Howard and Pierre. Seeing Pierre, who waits to drive him to the airport, Howard simply ‘raises a finger in greeting’: the complete absence of words during their encounter demonstrates the privileged individual’s ignorance and arrogance (24). On the way to the airport, Pierre tries to make conversation with Howard. Exclaiming ‘[a]lways flying’ and wistfully expressing his envy for Howard’s freedom to travel, Pierre looks at Howard ‘via the rear view’; yet Howard, through the mirror, feels ‘struck by the great width of his nose, straddling the two sides of his amiable face’ (25). The fact that Pierre only steals a glance at Howard ‘via the rear view’ reveals his inferior status when he confronts privileged individuals. By contrast, Howard, instead of paying attention to what Pierre is saying, feels ‘struck by the great width of his nose’ and tends to avoid further connections with Pierre because he perceives the Haitian as strange, exotic, and of a different race. Pierre and Howard do

not look one another directly in the eyes but only through the refracted images in the rearview mirror, which implies that the images can be distorted and thus the impression they get is likely to be misleading and inaccurate.

By repeatedly mentioning the physical beauty of Carl Thomas, the novel further illustrates how the underprivileged people tend to be objectified during the silent encounter, and their good intentions and creative talents are not seen or valued by others. Belonging to the black working class, Carl is a young talented American rapper, a 'street poet', who craves to meet more people out of his social circle and find a better platform to display his musical talent. Carl goes to watch the performance of Mozart's *Requiem* on Boston Common, where he meets Howard's family. Nonetheless, rather than having the chance to share his views on Mozart, Carl is simply seen as a beautiful figure. In the scene, Carl is described as the 'black boy with the elegant neck'; from Kiki's perspective, Carl is 'a tall young man with an elegant neck, sitting next to her daughter' (71). Carl's 'elegant neck' appears to be his defining feature: when Zora meets him on campus afterwards, she similarly focuses on his physical beauty, appreciating 'that elegant neck of his, angling the head away from the body like a young animal looking about the world for the first time' (133). The repeated description of the 'elegant neck' demonstrates how Carl, who comes from a disadvantaged background, is not seen as an educated and cultured person even though he comes to the concert and intentionally expands his social circle. During the silent encounter, Carl is defined only by his physical beauty, while his musical talent – his truly outstanding feature – tends to be overlooked. Carl's performance at the Bus Stop – a Moroccan restaurant in Wellington that regularly holds artistic events – is a huge success. However, the audience, instead of focusing on his artistic talents, admires his beautiful body – one of them exclaims, "OH MY GOD. IS HE STRAIGHT?" (231). Even Claire Malcolm, the English Professor at Wellington College who takes Carl into her poetry class, strangely mentions Carl's good looks when she introduces him to her colleague Erskine Jegede. Claire remarks that Carl is 'very good-looking. Very good-looking', and only following that comment does she add that 'he's a very good rapper – and he is talented' (370). The excessive

attention that others pay to Carl's physical attractiveness reveals how he is constantly being gazed at by others and objectified during the silent encounter: Carl is merely seen as a beautiful figure, while his good intention to meet new people and his musical talent, which truly defines him, are overlooked.

The fear of danger and threat is also foregrounded during the silent encounter: the mere presence of a 'strange' body may elicit anxiety and fear, and for this reason, the disadvantaged people are likely to be regarded as malicious or potentially threatening before any verbal communication. As Helga Leitner notes, 'fear and danger are not only associated with alleged criminal behaviour': for some groups of people, especially women, 'the mere presence of racialized bodies of immigrants in certain spaces elicits fear'.³⁵ In *On Beauty*, Kiki meets a Haitian seller who sells sterling silver – earrings, bracelets, necklaces – at the local market: the Haitian seller is a 'black man' and 'exceptionally skinny', and, from Kiki's perspective, his 'bloodshot eyes widen' as she leans over to check some earrings on the stall (47). The Haitian seller – who widens his 'bloodshot eyes' as Kiki leans over, from which angle, as Kiki believes, her bosom is more easily observed – is immediately deemed to be sexually threatening: Kiki has only a 'brief glimpse' of him, but 'she suspect[s] already that this would be one of those familiar exchanges in which her enormous spellbinding bosom would play a subtle...silent third role in the conversation' (47). While the Haitian seller's widened 'bloodshot eyes' possibly signify his lack of sleep and, together with his skinny figure, indicate the impoverished status of the Haitian immigrants, Kiki hastily perceives him as a malicious figure with a sexual interest in her, linking those physical traits with threat and danger. Similarly, Zadie Smith highlights how a mere random act of a black person might be linked with danger through the experience of Carl. In *On Beauty*, Carl runs after Zora as she mistakenly takes his Discman after the concert: shouting 'Hey' in the crowd, Carl fears that 'a six-foot-tall athletic black man' like him shouting in a dense crowd 'does not create

³⁵ Helga Leitner, 'Spaces of Encounters: Immigration, Race, Class, and the Politics of Belonging in Small-town America', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 102.4 (2012), 828-846 (p. 838).

easiness wherever he goes' (73). Zadie Smith notes how people are disturbed by Carl: 'The white people nearby look about themselves anxiously. Was there going to be trouble?' (73). While there is no direct communication between Carl and other people, the silent encounter is already at work. Although he does shout, it is clear that the 'silent' dimension – Carl's black skin and robust build – is regarded as the sign of danger; during the silent encounter, Carl is believed to be potentially threatening, even though he only seeks to take back his Discman and does not mean any harm as he runs in the crowd.

Section Two: When the Stranger Speaks – Subtle Conversations during the Fleeting Encounters between Carl and the Belsey Family

Whereas in silent encounters, people tend to believe that the strangers they meet are indifferent and even hostile, Zadie Smith's portrayal of Carl in *On Beauty* demonstrates that those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds both have the intention and endeavour to connect with others. Making a distinction between cosmopolitans, locals, and transnationals, Hannerz contends that only elites and the privileged can be cosmopolitans, while the disadvantaged and less privileged are rarely cosmopolitan due to their lack of orientation – that is, their lack of the 'intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness towards divergent cultural experiences'.³⁶ However, Carl's experience in *On Beauty* shows that Hannerz's view can be challenged. Carl comes to the Mozart concert with the intention of meeting 'the kind of people he [does not] usually meet' (75). Sitting next to Howard's family, he strains to hear their conversations about Mozart; not content to be a passive listener, he wishes to join in the conversation and make contributions of his own (75). We are told that more and more these days, Carl '[finds] himself listening to people talk, wanting to add something', but he tends to miss the opportunity because he is not 'in the habit of talking to strangers' (72). Later on, as he comes across Zora again on

³⁶ Hannerz, 'Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture', p. 239.

campus, Carl also takes the initiative in making conversation with her, seeking the opportunity to share his musical views. He tells Zora ‘I’m a musician also’ and ‘I’ve been reading about classic music’ (136). Carl tries to prove that, like her family, he has an intellectual grasp of art; he seeks to ‘lay some of [his] Mozart thoughts on her head’ and ‘see how she takes them,’ but Zora, who is simply attracted to abstract theories, remains silent and fails to provide proper responses (136-7). As I have shown above, although he appears to be passive and uninterested in reaching out, Carl does desire to expand his social circle, seeking to meet new people and expecting others to gain a better understanding of him.

The fleeting encounter between Zora and Carl after the concert demonstrates that the experience of meeting a stranger is both surprising and conflictual: it may yield unexpected results that promote cosmopolitanism and, at the same time, prove to be especially challenging due to unchecked prejudice. Hoping to take back his Discman, which was mistakenly taken by Zora after the concert, Carl calls aloud to her in the crowd, only to find that ‘there [is] no name to put on the end of *Hey*’ (73). In a hurry, the titles Carl uses to address Zora gradually change, as he shouts, ‘She’s got my Discman, this girl, this lady – just up there – sorry, ‘scuse me, man – ... *Hey! Hey, sister!*’ (73). Although Carl’s shouting ‘*Hey*’ in the crowd appears to be a sign of threat in the eyes of bystanders, his unconsciously changing his form of address to Zora (from the impersonal pronoun ‘she’, to ‘this girl’ ‘this lady’, and eventually to the more intimate ‘sister’) signals his unexpected and yet outright expressions of friendliness – and even intimacy – in a time of emergency, which exhibits traces of cosmopolitanism. Nonetheless, Smith also foregrounds the difficulty in establishing a cross-border communication, especially between total strangers, by representing the scene after Carl catches up with Zora. Without even bothering to check if she is wrong, Zora refuses to hear Carl’s explanation, simply saying that ‘I *know* my Discman – this is my Discman’ (74). Assuming that Carl is one of the ‘gangsters’ intending to steal her player, Zora arrogantly says to Levi when he advises her to double-check, ‘if you and your friend want to be *gangstas*, piece of advice: you’ve got to take, not ask’ (74). In the scene, the incident of retrieving the Discman unexpectedly becomes the trigger

for Carl's outright expression of friendliness, and yet Zora's arrogance and harshness in front of him demonstrate how the less privileged people tend to be deprived of the chance to speak and fail to deliver their message of kindness to others.

Carl and the Belseys' face-to-face communications afterwards are also full of tension. The way Howard relates to Carl is more about perfunctory politeness than genuine respect for difference; in comparison, Carl, being sensitive – and even oversensitive – to traces of his unpopularity, easily retreats to self-protection and steers the conversation in the direction of confrontation. Impatient about the delay after the concert, Howard exclaims '*Finally*' as Carl, Levi and Zora correct the misunderstanding (76). While Carl has been conversing with Levi in a relatively relaxed fashion, he 'pull[s] his baseball cap down low' and 'puts his hands in his pockets' immediately after seeing Howard (76). Carl's body gestures signal his distrust and self-defence against someone whom he believes may dislike him. Howard's absentmindedness in greeting Carl illustrates how encountering a stranger on the street may only lead to tolerance and formal politeness, but not the willingness to connect with them in a more meaningful way. With little interest in knowing Carl, Howard simply asks him 'distractedly', 'are you at Wellington? Familiar face', and he returns to 'looking out for a taxi' (76). As Park contends, 'the final obstacle to communication ... is self-consciousness'.³⁷ In the novel, Carl is quick at detecting even the smallest trace of another's prejudice or contempt, even though this may only be his flawed assumption. Howard's random question easily upsets him, since he assumes that Howard holds him in contempt: hearing Howard's question, Carl becomes confrontational, letting out 'a strange artificial laugh' and retorting 'Do I look like I'm at Wellington?' (76). Carl's self-consciousness and oversensitivity make him more inclined to misinterpret harmless, neutral statements. Inviting Carl to Claire's poetry class, Zora carelessly mentions that Claire is 'a poet poet' (77). However, in Carl's mind, this seems to suggest that he, as a 'street poet', is inferior:

³⁷ Robert E Park, 'The Urban Community as a Spatial Pattern and a Moral Order', *Urban Social Segregation*, (1926), 21-31 (p. 30).

he repeats the phrase '*poet poet*', and his 'smile disappear[s]' (77). As illustrated above, the communication between Carl and the Belsey family does not proceed smoothly. Despite the veneer of politeness, the privileged characters are not genuinely interested in connecting with a stranger; the less privileged ones, sensitive to certain words and phrases that reinscribe hierarchy and invoke social separation, are provoked to confrontation, resulting in the blocking of further connections.

During the fleeting encounter, the way Levi interacts with Carl shows that some people are particularly friendly to strangers and eager to help. However, the too-rapidly established friendship between them is not without its problems: Levi's keenness to befriend Carl turns out to be motivated by his own search for identity, and beneath their intimate chat we can detect unspoken doubt, uneasiness, and anxiety. Unlike Howard or Zora, who are cold and indifferent to Carl, Levi, identifying himself more with less privileged people, is especially warm and hospitable to him when they first meet. Levi strives to make conversation with Carl. He asks what music Carl has been listening to and warmly calls him 'brother', even though they have never met before; Levi also suggests that they exchange phone numbers, with Levi 'keenly' telling Carl to 'call [him] or whatever' (72-75). Levi's hospitality to Carl boosts the hope for cosmopolitanism: while some of his family members are uninterested in reaching out to strangers, Levi appears to be even more willing to help a stranger than his acquaintances or friends: '[f]ew among Levi's pastoral circle of family and teachers would have believed Levi could launch so promptly into action after an instruction as he did for this young man he had never met before' (73). However, beneath the rapidly-developed cross-border friendship is a hidden crisis: Levi's endeavour to connect with Carl appears to be unnatural and contrived; his excessive passion makes it hard for Carl to join in the conversation, which impedes effective communication and inhibits mutual understanding. Zadie Smith dramatises Levi's overwhelming desire to converse with Carl by showing how Levi 'ask[s] question after question, sometimes answering himself as Carl open[s] his mouth to reply' (75). The free-indirect speech used by Smith in the scene underlines Carl's doubts and uneasiness, which remain unspoken. Carl secretly wonders, 'where'd he

learn that you just ask some strange brother you have never seen before in your life if you can listen to his Discman' (75). He keeps 'trying to figure out what the deal was', and, without getting an answer, the doubts and suspicion remain – Carl plausibly concludes that 'it seemed like there was no deal – some people just like to talk' (75). As Valentine notes, in cross-border encounters, one's 'actual attitudes are only allowed to leak out in "privatized" spaces'.³⁸ In *On Beauty*, bewildered by Levi's unnatural friendliness, Carl wonders at the intention behind it, but he does not articulate his thoughts. The fact that Carl fails to express his doubt and suspicion during their face-to-face encounter makes it even harder for him to clear up the misunderstanding and resolve the conflict. As I have shown above, while people's indifference in cross-border encounters prohibits the establishment of connection, excessive friendliness and an overwhelming desire to befriend a stranger may breed unspoken suspicion and anxiety, and thus it may not help the generation of cosmopolitanism.

Zadie Smith further questions the extent to which connections established in an encounter can be developed into more sustained relations by representing Carl dropping by Howard and Kiki's house after their first meeting and being barred from joining their private party. As Wilson notes, 'encounter' usually implies 'momentary' and 'temporality', and thus it is questionable if "encounter" is a useful description for more "sustained" relations'.³⁹ In *On Beauty*, Kiki, like Levi, enthusiastically converses with Carl when they first meet, and she even invites Carl to attend her wedding anniversary party (78). Although the encounter between Kiki and Carl is temporary, Kiki's invitation suggests that a temporary encounter may create the chance of establishing further connections, since Kiki's informal chat with Carl in a public space has the potential to evolve into a deeper mutual understanding in the private residence. Although Carl is hesitant, he decides to take up Kiki's invitation and drop by Howard and Kiki's house on the day of their anniversary. However, the

³⁸ Valentine, 'Living with Difference', p. 329.

³⁹ Wilson, 'On Geography and Encounter', p. 462.

fragility of their connection is first shown by how Levi, who once called Carl ‘brother’ and exchanged phone numbers with him, forgets Carl’s name after they depart. Before going to the party, Carl informs Levi of his decision by sending him a message; it takes Levi ‘a minute to remember who the hell Carl [is]’ (83). As Carl knocks on the door of the Belseys’ home, it is Howard who comes to answer it: Carl introduces himself as a friend of Levi, but Howard does not let Carl enter their house, explaining that it is a ‘private party’ and ‘it is really a quite small affair’ (105). The fact that Howard refuses to let Carl in due to the ‘privacy’ and the ‘smallness’ of the party reveals how less-privileged people tend to be excluded from more intimate social circles, even though cross-border connections can be temporarily built in a public realm. It is ironic that while Carl is excluded from Howard and Kiki’s private party, the people who have received invitations are the students and professors from the Black Studies Department at Wellington College – the people who are knowledgeable and eloquent in speaking about Black popular culture (107). Their theoretical engagement with Blackness stands in contrast to their rejection of vernacular society as it is represented by Carl, who is supposed to be the ideal person to speak for the Black community and, as a rapper, to offer first-hand information about Black popular culture.

Section Three: Chaotic Spaces: Spatial Division, Cross-Border Experiences at the Bus Stop, and Fleeting Encounters in Streets and Markets

The fact that Carl is shut out of Howard and Kiki’s home makes manifest the ‘restricted areas’ in the seemingly unrestricted urban space and alerts us to segregations and divisions in other areas of the city, such as in neighbourhoods, squares, and markets. As Amin notes, ‘the freedoms of [urban] topology are ... constrained by the regulatory machinery of a city’, so the seemingly chaotic city is still a space of ordered interaction.⁴⁰ For instance, Howard Hallman observes that

⁴⁰ Amin, *Land of Strangers*, p. 65.

‘people with similarities tend to achieve closer neighbour relationships’: those from similar ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds live together, which means that urban living areas remain divided.⁴¹ In *On Beauty*, the neighbourhood where Chouchou, one of the Haitian immigrants, lives is separated from the more affluent neighbourhoods. The condition of Chouchou’s neighbourhood is harsh: shrubs and garbage pile up against the wall; a burned-out car is turned upside down; and derelict commercial properties can be seen on the street (‘a locksmith, a butcher and a lawyer [had] all failed to make a go of it here’) (356). It is a district almost exclusively populated by black people. This gives Levi a strange feeling of ‘homecoming’ when he pays a visit to Chouchou, and yet the fact that this ‘home’ is unfamiliar to Levi reveals how the more affluent people normally do not visit such poor neighbourhoods at all. Levi is shocked to notice how ‘everyone [on the street] is black’; he laments that ‘it [is] like a homecoming, except that he’d never known this home’ (356). As Amin stresses, the chaotic streets, squares and markets are also spaces of order, guided and constrained by such factors as traffic flow or spatial planning.⁴² In *On Beauty*, the spatial division of the market square at Wellington’s annual outdoor festival foregrounds the marginalised situation of the Haitian immigrants. The contrast between the populated main road where other merchants gather together and the quiet sidewalk where the Haitian seller stays is sharp: it is extremely prosperous and bustling on the main road – so crowded that even ‘the power of independent movement’ is taken away from pedestrians – whereas the Haitian seller’s stall is located on ‘the less populated sidewalk’ (47). The spatial division in the market square means that the Haitian seller, situated at the margin, has few chances to communicate with those from other backgrounds, even though the replicas of international totems on the bracelets sold by him – ‘Eiffel Tower, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and the Statue of Liberty’ – demonstrate that the dispossessed and marginalised people are also in the global market and influenced by cultures and economies from around the world (49).

⁴¹ Howard Hallman, *Neighborhoods: Their Place in Urban Life*, (London: Sage, 1984), p. 24.

⁴² Amin, *Land of Strangers*, p. 71.

Contrastingly, the Bus Stop – a venue that attracts both underprivileged art performers and college students such as the members of Claire’s poetry class – is the most cosmopolitan venue, where geographical boundaries are blurred. However, the condescending attitudes of Claire and her students reveal that being physically immersed in a new environment, especially only occasionally, may not necessarily promote understanding of, and empathy for, others. The Bus Stop, a Moroccan restaurant, is a popular place that brings together people from diverse backgrounds, from ‘black kids from Boston’ to ‘white kids from the college’ (212). Each year, Claire takes the new students in her poetry class here because it holds various artistic events, including the bi-monthly Spoken Word night, which enables Claire to show her students different branches of poetry and art. The Spoken Word night is the most inclusive event: it is ‘neither rap nor poetry’, neither ‘black’ nor ‘white’, and it makes ‘everybody feel at home’ (212). As Doc Brown the MC boasts, they have got ‘the United Nations of the Spoken World’ (222). The performers include ‘Caribbean brothers’ and ‘African brothers’: ‘some people gonna hit it in French and some others in Portuguese’ (222). The Spoken Word night at the Bus Stop provides a platform for the previously unheard people to speak up; it also creates the condition for others to hear their voices. The inclusiveness of the space and the diversity of the performances potentially increase the chance of mutual understanding. A wide range of topics are covered and different languages are used: a young man ‘speaks eloquently of American’s latest war’; three boys, with the last boy speaking Portuguese, recount ‘macho tales of street life’; and the Haitians accuse the United States of exploitative involvement in their country, speaking in Creole and then in English (222-8). However, despite the potential for deeper mutual understanding in such a convivial atmosphere, Claire and her students, rather than being open to different cultures, appear to be judgemental and condescending. In the eyes of Claire, the art on show is immature. She finds the young man’s rhyming ‘stiff’ and has to suppress ‘her hatred of elaborate metaphor’ in order to enjoy ‘the girl’s cruel, witty verse’ (222). With her attention ‘petering out’, Claire gets distracted and starts to ponder issues such as her childhood experience and her affair with Howard (223). The students also appear to

be impatient and judgemental. Chantelle laughs at the Haitians' performance and comments that their rhymes are 'nice and basic' (228). Zora dislikes what she sees as the Haitians' excessive anger, saying 'those guys are wild' and complaining that the failure of their performance has 'something to do with trying too hard' (229). The passion and liveliness on stage contrast with the impatience and dismissiveness of the members of the poetry class from Wellington College, who try to use the criteria applied at the college to evaluate the art forms they see at the Bus Stop. Claire believes that the Haitians 'have a little to learn about integration of idea and form' (229). Even after Carl's successful performance, Claire stops him and asks, 'are you interested in refining what you have' (232). The notion of 'refinement' reveals Claire's sense of superiority and arrogance. Although Claire and her students come to the Bus Stop to explore and learn, they are not open to fully experiencing how the underprivileged performers produce their art and culture, which are distinctive from – and thus perceived as inferior to – their own at the college.

The Bus Stop is similar to the marketplace, another space where there is a flow of people where cross-border connections are not so easy to establish: it appears that neither sellers nor customers are interested in having any conversations beyond those which are transactional, and few profound exchanges are generated there. As Amin notes, city streets and market squares are 'spaces of transit that produce little actual exchange between passing strangers': many conversations are either too brief or too functional to facilitate mutual understanding or stimulate further connections.⁴³ In *On Beauty*, the Haitian seller in the market square, especially at the beginning, offers little response to Kiki when she tries to have conversations with him. Apart from seeing her as an opportunity to earn money, he does not appear to be concerned about Kiki, 'neither as a person nor as an idea' (48). Busy 'fiddling with the coins in his fanny pack', the Haitian seller only stares at Kiki and says 'Fifty', which is the price of the item for sale (48). Likewise, customers are not interested in having lengthy or profound interactions with the salespersons and the merchants. When Levi works in

⁴³ Amin, *Land of Strangers*, p. 6.

the music section (Hip-hop, R & B and Urban) of a megastore in Boston, he imagines that he could ‘impart his knowledge of these genres to knowledge-seeking customers’ (181). Contrary to his expectation, the real conversations that he engages in are again simply transactional, responding to questions such as ‘*Where are the toilets? Where is Jazz? Where is World Music? Where is the cafe? Where is the signing?*’ (181). The banal and hollow conversations in the marketplace present challenges to vernacular cosmopolitanism since people’s main focus is on merchandise while shopping/selling, rather than having open exchanges of ideas or developing cross-border relationships with a stranger.

An even bleaker prospect of cosmopolitanism in the marketplace is shown by Chouchou, who purposefully transforms his fluent English into something plain and monosyllabic when communicating with the customers. Unlike other immigrants who may not speak English well, Chouchou, who was once a French teacher in Haiti, is an educated person and has a high level of proficiency in English. When Levi first meets Chouchou and chats with him, he does not expect to hear ‘such an extended piece of grammatically correct English’ (244). Nonetheless, as Chouchou begins to ‘hustle’ for customers on the street, his English ‘transform[s] at once into something simpler, monosyllabic’ (246). While Levi tries to ‘interject [speeches] about the quality of the merchandise’ when he sells together with Chouchou, he notices how the customers are ‘much more comfortable ... dealing with Chouchou than they [are] with [him]’ (246). As Levi realises afterwards, the customers ‘never want conversation’ because they are ‘ashamed to be buying’ from them on the street (246). In the scene, Chouchou skillfully adjusts his English according to different social contexts, which shows that he has good communicative skills and may even adapt to the local environment with greater proficiency than Levi. However, Chouchou’s versatile use of language is not employed to achieve better mutual understanding. Rather, by making his English ‘simpler’ and ‘monosyllabic’, he minimises the exchanges with the customers that he encounters from diverse backgrounds. Despite his ability to connect with people, Chouchou purposefully hides his language skills on the street; ironically, the customers are more willing to buy products from him than from Levi.

Through the portrayal of Chouchou on the street, the novel gives the lie to the suggestion that 'trade' facilitates cosmopolitanism automatically: transactional exchanges in the marketplace can easily take place without any cosmopolitan connection.

On the other hand, by representing the later interactions between Kiki and the Haitian seller, *On Beauty* also shows how the marginalised people in the marketplace have the potential to connect with others in a more meaningful way. The Haitian seller gives Kiki a moment of enlightenment, and this results in their achievement of a more balanced relationship, which raises some hope for vernacular cosmopolitanism. In the market square, Kiki tries to converse with the Haitian seller and asks if he is from 'Africa', but when he directs a question back at her – 'You are African, no?' – Kiki quickly denies any African heritage by emphasising that she is from 'here', which demonstrates her reluctance to identify herself with the Haitian seller (49). Nonetheless, the Haitian seller underlines their similarity and points out their shared origin: he says that they are 'all from Africa' and further mentions that the merchandise that attracts Kiki to him – such as the jewellery and bracelets – is 'from Africa' too (49). The question asked by the Haitian seller – 'you know where I am from' – exposes Kiki's ignorance about the person in front of her. Kiki looks up as the Haitian seller '[takes] a half step back to give her a full view of him'; the fact that she now sees the whole image of him demonstrates the start of mutual respect and her willingness to know him better (49). It is the conversation with the Haitian seller that brings Kiki a moment of enlightenment. Kiki comes to acknowledge that she has insufficient knowledge of Haiti – she realises that 'she has only the vaguest sense of the difficulty she had made reference to' (49). Even though Kiki feels that 'she must be very bored indeed to want to be right before this man', she is ashamed 'to be caught under the pretence of having more knowledge than she possess[es]' (49). A reversal of power is evident when the Haitian seller, who used to be in an inferior position, solemnly 'engages [Kiki's] eyes' and explains the plight of his country to her (50). In the process, a more balanced relationship between the privileged and less privileged people is shown symbolically in the scene where the Haitian seller puts on

the anklet for Kiki, who ‘has to rest her hand on his shoulder’, being entirely dependent on him (50). Their physical contact represents their trust in each other and the start of mutual dependence, which gestures towards the birth of vernacular cosmopolitanism.

Section Four: Accumulated Encounters and the Possibility of Deep Mutual Understanding: The Cross-border Friendship between Chouchou and Levi

Just like Kiki and the Haitian seller, who deepen their mutual understanding on the street, the friendship between Chouchou and Levi also begins in the street. Their first meeting, however, does not proceed smoothly due to the ‘asymmetrical’ communication between privileged and less privileged persons. As Young notes, cross-border communications are asymmetrical because ‘those who attempt to adopt the standpoint of others [often] stand in a relation of social privilege to those whose perspective they claim to adopt’: the privileged persons, with their advantages, may either knowingly or unknowingly fail to treat others with sufficient respect.⁴⁴ In *On Beauty*, Levi encounters Chouchou when he hustles counterfeit products on the streets of Boston; fascinated by street culture, Levi seeks to befriend Chouchou, and he later joins the Haitians’ hustling team. The first time they formally meet each other, Levi, who desires to promote intimacy with Chouchou, proposes to call him ‘Choo’ instead of ‘Chouchou’: as Levi excitedly exclaims, ‘You know, like a *train*, like, choo choo! Train coming through! Like a *train*’ (244). In Levi’s mind, Choo also sounds cool because ‘Choo’ and ‘Levi’ match: as Levi insists, ‘that works, actually. It works. Levi and Choo’ (244). However, Levi’s gesture of friendliness fails to please Chouchou: he only coldly replies that Choo ‘is not [his] name’ and he tells Levi that ‘Chouchou’, his real name, is ‘Haitian’, spelling it out as ‘C-H-O-U-C-’ (244). The nickname ‘Choo’ does not promote their friendship: without responding to Levi, Chouchou ‘[frees] his hand from Levi’s’ and avoids eye contact with him, ‘looking both ways down the street’ (244). Although Levi means well, his suggestion of replacing ‘Chouchou’ (a

⁴⁴ Young, ‘Asymmetrical Reciprocity’, p. 349.

Haitian name that sounds meaningless to Levi) with the English word ‘Choo’ symbolises how the privileged people, with their particular experience and advantages, fail to treat others with respect in seeking to incorporate them into their social and cultural system. By contrast, Chouchou’s insistence that his name is ‘Haitian’ and his endeavour to teach Levi the Haitian word – by spelling it letter by letter – demonstrate his resistance to losing his Haitian origin and culture.

Encounters are not only about the here and now: hidden factors such as one’s past experiences and one’s socioeconomic status are important, and this partly explains why Levi and Chouchou’s friendship is difficult to establish when they first meet. Noting the broader spatio-temporality of encounters, Valentine states that ‘encounters never take place in a space free from history, material conditions, and power’.⁴⁵ In *On Beauty*, Levi is fascinated with selling counterfeit products – such as imitations of Gucci and Prada – with Chouchou on the street. He believes that they are not simply ‘selling’, but rather ‘hustling’: an exciting job that may even bear a cosmopolitan feature in uniting ‘brothers’ from diverse backgrounds and subverting economic inequality. Levi claims ‘to hustle is to be alive’ and believes ‘it’s a beautiful thing’; in his mind, it is hustling that ‘joins us all together – whether we be on Wall Street or on MTV or sitting on a corner with a dime-bag’ (245). Levi does not understand that for Chouchou, hustling is a necessity – it is not comparable to a professional life, entertainment, or a life of romantic criminality (‘dime bag’ implies drug-dealing). While Levi is excited about the idea of hustling, Chouchou responds differently; he says ‘I don’t know what you are talking about’ and ignores Levi when he attempts to press on further with the topic (245). Levi believes that by selling cheap imitations they are stealing money from the rich, but Chouchou, who has witnessed how unfairly workers are treated in factories and has personal experience of deprivation, does not share Levi’s idealistic view. As Chouchou later explains, the money they make on the street is not theirs but the ‘leader’ Felix’s money; recounting his experiences at the shoe factory and when he ‘worked the cabs’, Chouchou tells Levi that ‘You’re the one

⁴⁵ Valentine, ‘Living with Difference,’ p. 333.

being hustled, my friend' (246-7). Chouchou speaks to him with sadness, admitting 'I really fucking *hate* to sell things, you know?' (245). While to Levi, who comes from a relatively affluent family, selling products on the street is nothing more than an exciting adventure, to Chouchou it denotes poverty and dispossession. Although 'hustling' appears to connect Chouchou and Levi, it signifies different things to them due to their distinct past experiences and socioeconomic status, and this makes it difficult to establish cross-border connections and adds complexity to vernacular cosmopolitanism.

On Beauty does, though, demonstrate the possibility of further mutual understanding between Levi and Chouchou by representing how encounters tend to accumulate, which gradually shifts relations and behaviours. Although Levi and Chouchou's first meeting appears to be conflictual, Levi afterwards reads the book on Haiti and pays a visit to Chouchou. Discussing what constitutes a 'meaningful' encounter, Wilson warns of the danger of 'equating meaning [only] with a positive experience'.⁴⁶ In their first encounter, when Levi tries to refer to 'the book on Haiti that he had borrowed', he embarrassingly finds that 'it was as yet unread' (248). However, the fact that Levi takes out that book again and reads it on the way to Chouchou's house shows how their first encounter, despite being far from pleasant, motivates him to gain further knowledge of Chouchou and his country (355). The scene in which Chouchou opens the door for Levi and lets him enter his apartment is symbolic of their deepening friendship. Unlike their first encounter, their second meeting is less confrontational, and the gesture of opening the door for a stranger and letting him enter the private realm signals their more open attitude towards each other. The emergence of a balanced relationship between Levi and Chouchou is shown in the scene when Chouchou accepts the food brought by Levi when he comes to visit: as Levi explains, 'when you go see someone, you bring something. In America – that's how we do [it]' (358). Reaching over and taking the offered packets from Levi's hand, Chouchou appreciates the fact that Levi's sharing of food is not a

⁴⁶ Wilson, 'On Geography and Encounter', 461.

condescending act of charity, as he previously assumes, but rather a sign of genuine friendship based on mutual respect and equality.

The scenes in which Chouchou listens to the songs played on Levi's iPod and Levi goes to the library to check out Haitian music demonstrate how these two persons from distinct backgrounds are united by their appreciation and exchange of art. On his visit to Chouchou's place, Levi takes out his iPod and plays for Chouchou songs from the album *Fear of a Black Planet*, which is the music that Levi 'has just been listening to in the street' (360). This album, released by American hip hop group Public Enemy in 1990, explores themes of organisation and empowerment within the black community, social issues affecting African Americans, and race relations at the time.⁴⁷ The political messages conveyed in *Fear of a Black Planet* resonate with Chouchou, who connects the songs that he hears with the situation in his home country. Repeating the lines in the song '*We were not the only ghetto*', Chouchou exclaims that 'America has ghettos! And Haiti is the ghetto of America!' (360). Similarly, Levi is touched by the Haitian music he is introduced to by Chouchou. The experience of listening to the songs from Levi's album encourages Chouchou to share his Haitian music, but he does not have it to hand; as Chouchou mournfully says to Levi, 'I wish I could play you some of our music, Haitian music', 'I could tell you things about my country' (360). Inspired by Chouchou, Levi goes to the library in Wellington College to get access to Haitian music and he listens to it at home. Though he does not have much knowledge of Haiti, Levi is touched by the music and empathises with the country and its people: he appreciates the 'lovely sadness of that Haitian music' and feels 'the way the many harmonized voices [sound] ... like a whole nation weeping in tune' (408).

As I have shown above, Levi and Chouchou's friendship develops through accumulated encounters, which raises the hope for vernacular cosmopolitanism. Nonetheless, in his interactions with Chouchou, Levi gradually becomes part of

⁴⁷ Marcus Reeves, *Somebody Scream!: Rap Music's Rise to Prominence in the Aftershock of Black Power*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2009).

Chouchou's nationalist project to retrieve whatever 'belongs' to Haiti, and the radical activities they undertake demonstrate how their cross-border alliance remains founded on the principle of exclusion and antagonism. As Pheng Cheah underlines, many of the transnational activities we witness today may not be acts of cosmopolitanism but rather 'aporetic cases of nationalism ... in a cosmopolitical field'.⁴⁸ In *On Beauty*, as they get to know each other, Chouchou starts to see Levi as a friend, telling him more about the sufferings of Haitian immigrants and communicating his resentment at their unfair treatment. Hearing Chouchou's side of the story, Levi feels deep sympathy for him, and he begins to fight together with Chouchou for the Haitian immigrants' rights. However, in their cross-border friendship, which potentially paves the way for cosmopolitanism, Levi is not critical enough to add anything significant from his own perspective; rather, he appears to be incorporated into the Haitians' nationalist project. In the town's square, Levi and Chouchou, who are in the 'Haitian Support Group', protest together against unfair payment for Wellington's Haitian workers. When they later come across Levi's brother Jerome, Chouchou affectionately introduces Levi as their 'little American mascot', saying that 'he fights shoulder to shoulder with us for justice' (404). The phrase 'American mascot' reveals that in Chouchou's mind, Levi, despite being supportive, is more like an appendage of the Haitian immigrants who strive for their national rights. The collective terms 'our' and 'ours' used by Chouchou reveal his nationalist sentiment: as Chouchou explains, the purpose of their protest is 'getting back what is *ours*' and 'taking back what has been stolen from our people' (404). In his interactions with Chouchou, Levi seems to have lost his identity, being instead assimilated into the Haitians' project to retrieve things that 'belong' to Haiti. Believing that they need to reclaim the property stolen from Haiti, Levi and Chouchou steal the Haitian painting *Maîtresse Erzulie* from the Black Studies Department at Wellington College. They believe that 'this painting is stolen [from Haiti] anyway' and 'it does not even belong to that guy Kipps' (428). The statement that the painting does not 'belong' here but rather to Haiti reveals how the cross-border alliance

⁴⁸ Pheng Cheah, 'Given Culture: Rethinking Cosmopolitical Freedom in Transnationalism', *Cultural Politics*, 14 (1998), 290-328 (p. 292).

between Levi and Chouchou remains based on nationalist sentiment – that is, on the belief in fighting for the rights of Haiti and the Haitians. Yet, in separating Haiti from other countries, such a cross-border connection fails to cultivate an open attitude towards global others on a large scale.

Section Five: From the Street to the Campus: Carl's Experience at Wellington College and the Assimilation into/Contamination of a New Culture

In contrast to Levi and Chouchou, who seek to make their voices heard at the margins of society, Carl Thomas joins Claire Malcolm's poetry class at Wellington College and has the chance to immerse himself in an academic culture that is unfamiliar to him. His participation as a 'street poet' in the class brings a hybrid style and different ideas to the College, and these challenge the conventions of the academy. Claire first meets Carl when he performs rap at the Spoken Word night at the Bus Stop; impressed by his artistic talent and seeking to 'refine' his art, Claire invites Carl to attend her poetry class at Wellington College. Yet, as Houston Baker notes, when the previously marginalised black people are offered higher education in college – a trend facilitated by the establishment of 'Black studies' as an academic discipline – they are far from 'grateful subjects' but rather 'vociferously cantankerous', and they bring 'a hybridity of style that scarcely matched the "reality" of the American academic garden'.⁴⁹ In *On Beauty*, Carl purposefully challenges the conventions in class: he attends his first poetry class 'wearing a comic, sceptical slouch', and he reads his lyrics 'in a grumpy mumble' as if he is 'angered by the interested appreciation with which they were met' (259). Disagreeing with Claire, who tends to 'discuss' and 'analyse' his rap in the same way that she analyses poems, Carl clarifies that his work is 'not even a poem ... It's a rap' and stresses that poem and rap are 'two different things ... two different art forms. Except rap ain't no art form. It's just *rap*' (259). As Baker notes, 'rap cannot be hastily and prolifically appropriated or "covered" by

⁴⁹ Houston Baker, *Black Studies, Rap, and the Academy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 15.

white artists': while Claire's inclination to equate rap with poetry erases the uniqueness of Carl's art, Carl insists on distinguishing the two genres and thereby maintains his distinct and independent status, both as a black person and as a rapper.⁵⁰ Although Claire originally seeks to refine his work by taking Carl into her poetry class, Carl does not follow Claire's rules; instead, he refuses to be assimilated into the new system and brings something new and unconventional to the academic culture.

Carl is offered a job as Hip-Hop Archivist in the college library when Claire can no longer let him stay in her poetry class, and his transfer from the class to the library demonstrates how underprivileged people remain marginalised within the seemingly inclusive institution. Despite the wish to have Carl in her class, Claire comes under much pressure from conservative colleagues such as Monty Kipps who oppose letting Carl, who is not enrolled as a Wellington student, stay at the college. In his capacity as Assistant Director of the Black Studies Department, Erskine Jegede helps Claire out by 'creating' a job for Carl and transferring him to the college's African-American Music Library (372). In the music library, the only librarian Carl works with is Ms Elisha Park, who is 'a little fat black girl, a graduate student from a third-rate college way down South' (372). The fact that Elisha is also 'black' and has graduated from 'a third-rate college' reveals how Elisha, like Carl, belongs to the ethnic minority and comes from a less advantaged background. Although Carl and Elisha share the same campus with what they call 'real' Wellington students, they are differentiated from them and kept in isolation. Carl and Elisha form 'a gang of two', 'always 'stepped for the contempt of the students and faculty, but equally appreciative when "they" treated "us" kindly' (372). As the novel shows, Carl's transfer from the poetry class to the library and his experience there demonstrate how the underprivileged people, even though they are by chance taken into a higher social circle, are factually marginalised and quickly forgotten by the privileged others. While Carl is excited about getting the new job and has many ideas on how to improve the library, Elisha points out that no one cares about their opinions, saying 'this is the kind of job ... that you have to make

⁵⁰ Baker, *Black Studies*, p. 65.

something of for *yourself*, and she reminds Carl of their marginalised status – ‘we’re not really a part of this community, are we? I mean, no one’s gonna help us feel that way’ (374). It turns out that Erskine, who is skilled at ‘making people feel more important than they actually [are]’, soon forgets Carl once he transfers him to the music library (374). Erskine is ‘never available’, and when Carl occasionally comes across him in the hallway, Erskine appears ‘confused as to who Carl even [is]’, suggesting that ‘he address all queries to the librarian’, whose name he has also forgotten (374).

Paradoxically, the fact that Carl is situated in a liminal space – staying on campus but not quite belonging there – facilitates his cosmopolitanism: Carl desires to create his art and leave his unique mark on the college, and the fact that he is marginalised and distanced from others gives him more room to experiment and explore. Speaking of the cosmopolitan potential of a stranger who enters a new group, Alfred Schütz notes that ‘the adaptation of the newcomer to the in-group which at first seemed to be strange and unfamiliar to him is a continuous process of inquiry’.⁵¹ In the African-American Music Library, Carl believes that he is ‘being hired because he [knows] this subject, this thing called hip-hop’ (372); although he does not receive much support from other faculties, Carl is determined to ‘improve the archive’ and ‘make it more student-friendly’ (373-4). Whereas in Claire’s class, Carl does not have much freedom in choosing what he learns and how he learns, in a marginalised situation he has more room to test his knowledge in music and develop his artistic creativity. As a hip-hop archivist, he manages to buy the records that he loves. In his third week of work, Carl ‘start[s] to get into the research end of things’ and experiments with his idea of helping people to cross-reference when they search for the music in the archive; he selects cross-reference subjects and types up thousands of words on the computer (375). Although no one pays him for the extra work, Carl finds ‘he was interested in the work he was doing – he *wanted* to do it’ (374-5). As it turns out, Carl gradually deviates from the pathways designed for him by Claire and Zora. Encouraged by

⁵¹ Alfred Schütz, ‘The Stranger: An Essay in Social Psychology’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 49.6 (1944), 499-507 (p. 507).

Claire, Zora, who engages in many activities, works hard to get Carl back into the poetry class, but Carl is no longer interested in returning to it. When Zora comes to visit him in the library and ‘waits for him to mention their campaign to keep discretionaries in class’, no mention comes; instead, Carl speaks of ‘the Hip-hop Archive, and the need for more Gospel, the growing African section’ (410). No longer a passive listener in Claire’s class, Carl grows into a person who independently researches and explores the areas that he is interested in. With his artistic talent and his knowledge of African-American music, Carl puts his creative ideas into practice and manages to leave his unique mark on the community that has been unfamiliar and hostile to him.

Carl first chooses the subject of ‘crossroads’ when he sets out to help people establish cross-references in the archive. ‘Crossroads’ is a real song by the American blues musician Robert Johnson, who ‘allegedly “sold his soul” to the devil for virtuosic guitar playing ability’.⁵² Importantly, as Justin Harmon notes, the ‘devil’ that Johnson sings about is similar to Legba in Afro-Caribbean culture, who is considered a trickster who ‘flouts the norms of society’ in the African-American tradition. Seeing himself as the ‘child of Legba’, Johnson represents all liminal figures who ‘stand at the crossroads where cultures meet’, challenging the social structure and embracing identities that are otherwise seen as deviant.⁵³ In *On Beauty*, the fact that Carl chooses the subject of ‘crossroads’ also reveals how he endeavours to challenge conventional social norms and to connect his previous knowledge of hip-hop and street culture with his current experience in the academy. As Carl says, ‘crossroads’ not only refers to ‘The Tracy Chapman album’ but is also a ‘motif’. The word ‘motif’, used by Carl, reveals how he borrows from the discourse in the academy and so absorbs a new culture (378). As he further explains, the term ‘crossroads’ is used to ‘represent personal decisions and choices, to represent “going straight”, to represent the history of hip-hop itself, and the split between “conscious” lyrics and “gangsta”’ (378).

⁵² Justin Harmon, ‘The Crossroads: Selling Your Soul for Rock n’Roll’, *Leisure Sciences*, (2020), 1-21 (p. 1).

⁵³ Harmon, ‘The Crossroads’, p. 2-4.

Exploring the rich meaning embedded in the ‘crossroad’, Carl seeks to connect a theoretical interpretation of the subject with his knowledge of hip-hop history as well as his personal experience and reflections since he has entered this new environment.

However, the novel also shows how Carl, in fulfilling his artistic ambition at Wellington College, distances himself from other underprivileged people who used to be his friends; he gradually departs from the cosmopolitan spirit when he sees himself as a member of the privileged group. When Carl’s old friends from the neighbourhood hear about his new job, they are happy for him and congratulate Carl for ‘getting paid to listen to music’ and ‘*stealing they dollars from under they noses*’ (373). Nonetheless, Carl ‘surprise[s] himself by getting a little pissed at this kind of congratulation’: recalling Erskine’s welcome letter, he figures that ‘he is part of the effort to “make a public record of our shared aural culture for future generations”’ (373). Unlike his old friends, who endorse the nationalist sentiment in thinking that Carl, in finding a position among the privileged people, should take revenge on them for their previous exploitation and oppression, Carl believes that he does a more valuable job than simply making money and that he is committed to a significant cosmopolitan cause. Although Carl no longer takes satisfaction from fighting for merely national goals, his emerging cosmopolitan idea does not have a solid foundation and becomes detached from reality. This is shown in the scene where Carl closes the window as he hears the Haitians’ protest in the square. Upset by the noise of the Haitian protestors outside his office, Carl complains that ‘I can’t see them, but I can hear them, man, they *loud*’ (376). Knowing that the ‘windows don’t close right’, he nonetheless proposes to close them and feels much better when he no longer hears the sound. As he says, he needs a ‘little peace ... when he’s working’ (379). Whereas the open windows symbolise Carl’s access to the outside world and his openness towards real-world problems, Carl chooses to stay inside the office and keep himself in a vacuum, which makes his ideas about cosmopolitanism seem hollow and unrealistic.

Conclusion

Representing the different types of encounters between privileged and underprivileged people in Wellington, Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* encourages its readers to be sensitive to the nuances of vernacular cosmopolitanism in the context of glocal cohabitation. Two aspects of the novel are particularly worthy of attention when examining the relationship between glocalisation and vernacular cosmopolitanism. Firstly, Smith shows that the condition of glocalisation does not result in a free interaction between people from different backgrounds. In *On Beauty*, geographical boundaries remain firmly in place in the multicultural college town, as we see in Chouchou's largely monoethnic neighbourhood or in the public sphere (such as the markets and streets where the Haitian sellers work in isolation). Secondly, she shows that, while some people are able to engage in cross-border encounters, apparently overcoming geographic boundaries, such encounters are conditioned and limited by a sense of difference. Many hidden elements are embedded in the face-to-face interactions: for example, Chouchou's personal history partly accounts for his cautious response to Levi's kindness, and Carl's lower social and economic status may explain his oversensitivity when he interacts with the Belsey family. As the novel demonstrates, the fact that many socio-cultural factors are at work during face-to-face cross-border interactions adds complexity to vernacular cosmopolitanism.

On Beauty does not offer any easy answer to the question of whether living close to 'strangers', with the more frequent encounters this facilitates as part of the glocalised condition, makes cosmopolitanism possible. In almost every type of cross-border encounter analysed in this chapter, there are both positive and negative signs. One exception to this is the silent encounter: when there is no verbal communication to enable exchange, people tend to harshly judge strangers by their appearances, such as skin colour or clothing (as represented in *On Beauty* by the Belseys' interactions with the Haitians Monique and Pierre), and this only reinforces social and racial stereotypes of the underprivileged or ethnic minorities as hostile, threatening, and dangerous. Aside from this, Smith offers a richly ambiguous snapshot of vernacular

cosmopolitanism. On the one hand, the fleeting encounters in the market space tend to be too brief to be meaningful; on the other, Kiki's interactions with the Haitian seller bring glimpses of enlightenment and plant the seeds of cosmopolitanism. Carl's entry into Wellington College potentially opens up the academic culture to outside influence, and yet he distances himself from other underprivileged people and gradually turns his back on cosmopolitanism.

Despite the ambiguity, however, *On Beauty* seems to suggest that the more frequently cross-border encounters take place, and the more closely strangers co-exist, the less 'strange' these strangers appear to be, and the more common ground can be discovered between people from different backgrounds. While in silent and fleeting encounters, it appears as if Carl and Chouchou both look and behave differently from the privileged others, as more cross-border interactions take place so more points of sameness begin to be found, and even their differences turn out to be an asset for the cosmopolitan outlook. In *On Beauty*, Haitian music is appreciated by both Levi and Chouchou, and what Carl brings to Wellington College is not shown to be incompatible with academic culture. Carl's cultural identity hybridises with the academic culture and helps it evolve. The idea of 'universality plus difference', which is at the core of cosmopolitanism, is foregrounded: the seemingly extreme strangeness of a stranger, or certain groups of strangers, can be exposed as a misconception. This insight leads neatly on to the following chapter, which considers global Islam and the prospect of cosmopolitan culture in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*.

Global Islam and the Prospect of Cosmopolitan Culture in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*

Introduction

Now living in North London, Nadeem Aslam was born in 1966 in the Punjabi city of Pakistan. He moved to Huddersfield when he was 14, and he continues to live in West Yorkshire, but now in a lakeside setting in the countryside. His father, Mian Mohammed Aslam, is a communist poet and filmmaker and a member of the Progressive Writers Association, whereas his mother is more conservative, whose background was orthodox Sunni. Born into a family comprised of 'communists and rightwingers, religious nuts and atheists', Aslam nevertheless describes himself as a 'non-believer': the family displays 'all the colours' which Aslam believes the writer needs to convey 'the very different ways [of being] Muslim' – something he attempts to do in his post-9/11 novels such as *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004).¹ As Aslam argues, 'a novel is a democracy', and the 'novelist [must] work hard at making ... everybody human'.² In the aftermath of 9/11, Muslim and Islamic religion and culture have been been 'un-cultured' by the barbarising discourses of the West. Aslam in *Maps for Lost Lovers*, nonetheless, both recasts diasporic Muslim peoples as 'deeply, sensually human', to quote Madeline Clements, and presents alternative aspects of Islam's written, oral and visual culture, which even takes on cosmopolitan features.³

In his essay 'The Clash of Civilizations?', Samuel Huntington argues that '[c]ivilization identity will be increasingly important in the future' as the world is becoming a smaller place and the interactions between peoples of different

¹ Nadeem Aslam, 'Nadeem Aslam', Interview with Nadeem Aslam, Interviewed by Claire Chambers for *British Muslim Fictions: Interviews with Contemporary Writers*, 2011 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), 132-55 (p.151).

² Aslam, 'Nadeem Aslam', Interview with Nadeem Aslam, Interviewed by Claire Chambers, p. 142.

³ Madeline Clements, *Writing Islam from a South Asian Muslim Perspective*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015), p.89.

civilisations are increasing.⁴ Huntington singles out eight major civilisations – Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and African – and he is pessimistic about their compatibility and predicts that unavoidable ‘clashes’ will define our increasingly interconnected world.⁵ The World Trade Centre attacks on 11 September 2001 have subsequently been cited as bearing out Huntington’s prediction; it has created a narrative demonising one nominal ‘civilisation’ – Islam – and posed a significant challenge to multicultural societies, especially those in Western countries where Muslim immigrant communities are prominent. After 9/11, the ‘clash of civilizations’ discourse has regained popularity in the West and has become the jargon of politicians and the media: it serves to position Muslims as premodern and even fundamentally ‘evil’, and the jargon has been manipulated in line with revised geopolitical agendas and in support of the ‘war on terror’.⁶ The self/other discourse that it underscores is clearly too reductive to cover the richness of Islamic religion and culture, which have many branches and are, as Jan Nederveen Pieterse notes, never short of cosmopolitan elements.⁷ Attributing negative qualities to the entirety of Islam also neglects the fact that discussions of religion and culture can only be conducted within changing political, social and economic circumstances: Islam, as Mahmood Mamdani states, should not be ‘quarantined’ because politics and power ‘are born of an encounter, and neither can be understood outside of the history of that encounter’.⁸ Representing a Pakistani diaspora in an English town distant to London, Nadeem Aslam’s *Maps for Lost Lovers* defies the static and monolithic view of Islam; the novel represents the Muslims’ diverse and dynamic relationships with Islamic religion and culture in the context of late twentieth and early twenty-first-century migration to Britain. *Maps for Lost Lovers* calls to

⁴ Samuel Huntington, ‘The Clash of Civilizations?’, *Foreign Affairs*, 72.3 (1993), 22-49 (p. 25).

⁵ Huntington, ‘The Clash of Civilizations?’.

⁶ Clements, *Writing Islam from a South Asian Muslim Perspective*.

⁷ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Ethnicities and Global Multiculture: Pants for an Octopus*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007).

⁸ Mahmood Mamdani, ‘Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: A Political Perspective on Culture and Terrorism’, *American Anthropologist*, 104.3 (2002), 766-775 (p. 766).

mind Oliver Roy's observation that Islam in the current context of globalisation should be seen as a 'globalised Islam': the way in which the diasporic Muslims relate to Islam has been 'reshaped by globalisation, westernisation and the impact of living as a minority'.⁹ Portraying the renewed relationships between Muslims and Islam, *Maps for Lost Lovers* illustrates diasporic Muslims' loneliness and anxiety in the diaspora and foregrounds their constant search for openness, redemption and the hope for a cosmopolitan future.

I contend that Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* exposes the fallacy in regarding Islam, especially since 9/11, as a fundamentally incompatible 'other'. Dramatising the Muslims' dynamic relationships with Islam in the Pakistani diaspora in Britain, *Maps for Lost Lovers* shows that globalised Islam has cosmopolitan potential, and yet equally, experiences in the Pakistani diaspora erect barriers to the establishment of cosmopolitan connections. Echoing Edward Said's criticism that "'Islam" [in western discourses] defines a relatively small proportion of what actually takes place in the Islamic world', the novel illuminates the shifting, granular changes in Islamic life in the context of globalised locality, and it foregrounds the clashes, negotiations, and reconciliations between these different constituencies of Islam.¹⁰ Cosmopolitanism is embedded in Aslam's representation of globalised Islam: it can be shown, for instance, by characters drawn towards an imagined Islamic 'orthodoxy' and its reinterpretation according to their cosmopolitan impulses; by the resurgent Sufism which is connected with fantastic cosmopolitan visions; by elite Muslims' advocacy of a hybridised Islam that bridges the gap between East and West; by young Muslims' westernised Islam that paves the way for a cosmopolitan future. However, *Maps for Lost Lovers* also explores the multiple barriers to cosmopolitan Islam. As Aslam acknowledges, '[i]n a way, the book is about September 11'; in this book, he seeks to 'condemn the small-

⁹ Oliver Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. ix.

¹⁰ Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, (London: Vintage, 1997), p. xvi.

scale September 11s that go on every day'.¹¹ *Maps for Lost Lovers* dramatises the everyday injustice and hostility that diasporic Muslims confront: this is illustrated, for instance, by the prejudices against veil-wearing and by the abusive language of 'terror' and 'terrorism' that is used against Muslims in the diaspora. Furthermore, although the Muslims following the different branches of Islam have shown cosmopolitan potential, they all possess defects and limitations. The novel foregrounds tensions, such as those between freedom and agency, and between the desire to adhere to tradition and custom and the impulse to violate them; these tensions reveal both the possibilities of, and challenges to, cosmopolitan Islam.

Maps for Lost Lovers is set against the background of the mysterious disappearance of a Muslim couple, Jugnu and Chanda, who turn out to be the victims of honour killing due to their premarital cohabitation, which violates certain traditional Islamic principles. Centring around the family of Shamas (Jugnu's brother) one year after the honour killing, the novel illustrates their struggle to recover from the trauma caused by the couple's death and by other tragic events that have happened to the diasporic community. By predominantly focusing on Shamas' family, I examine the various manifestations of globalised Islam in the novel and explore the extent to which globalised Islam assumes cosmopolitan features as these are emblematised and offered for interpretation in the characters. Shamas' wife Kaukab, a middle-aged Muslim woman, initially encodes a conservative and dogmatic strain of Islamic belief. I examine how Kaukab starts to reflect on the Quran and to generate new interpretations of it in the domestic space – a space where the traditional Islamic beliefs and practices she remembers from her childhood are no longer strictly followed after the move to a Western country. Shamas, an ageing amateur poet and Community Relations Council director, suggests an idea of liberal Muslims who strive to bridge the gap between East and West. He observes cosmopolitan elements in

¹¹ Nadeem Aslam, 'Nadeem Aslam: A Question of Honour', Interview with Nadeem Aslam. Interviewed by Marianne Brace for *The Independent*, (11 June 2004). [Online] Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/nadeem-aslam-a-question-of-honour-6167858.html>. (Accessed 30 August 2020).

Sufism and aesthetic Islam and advocates for the practice of hybridised Islam in public spheres. However, Shamas has his limits. His hypocritical interactions with Kaukab and Suraya, a Muslim divorcee with whom Shamas commences an adulterous affair, indicate that the prescription of liberalism as a route to cosmopolitanism occurs only within set boundaries and often fails to solve concrete difficulties that diasporic Muslims encounter. I conclude with a study of the young Muslims as represented by Shamas' and Kaukab's three children, Charag, Mah-Jabin, and Ujala. The young Muslims in *Maps for Lost Lovers* represent what Arun Kundnani observes as 'a new generation in the UK' who manages to transplant Islam to British soil and make feasible 'a British Islamism focused on civil rights campaigning, democratic participation and a reconfiguring of Islamic identity'.¹² I examine how in the novel the young Muslims' views of Islam differ from those of their parents due to their upbringing in Western countries. I investigate how they begin to bypass, in Kundnani's words, 'the traditional mosque leadership (whose religious practice is bound up with their home countries)' and contribute to a hybrid and westernised Islam, which paves the way for a cosmopolitan future.¹³

Literature Review: Globalised Islam and Cosmopolitanism

One focus of this chapter is to examine how *Maps for Lost Lovers* imagines cosmopolitan potential via globalised encounters even in characters that adhere to a stricter or more orthodox Islamic life, personified most clearly in the figure of Kaukab. Strict adherence to tenets laid down in the Quran is not in and of itself counter to cosmopolitanism, as the text Quran is full of humanitarian values and advocates for a strong consciousness of civilisation. As Osman Baker notes, humanitarian elements are embedded in 'such Quranic ideas as common human ancestry, common humanity, universal goodness of the human being, universality of divine favours to the human

¹² Arun Kundnani, 'Islamism and the Roots of Liberal Rage', *Race & Class*, 50.2 (2008), 40-68 (p. 62).

¹³ Kundnani, 'Islamism and the Roots of Liberal Rage', p. 62.

race, ...[and] the wisdom of ethnic and cultural pluralism'.¹⁴ To some extent, adherence to Quranic ideas facilitates adaptation to the new globalised situation as the text provides for the kind of universalism and pluralism required by cosmopolitanism. In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, for example, Kaukab invokes the idea of unbounded love dictated by the Quran to alleviate her loneliness and despair in a foreign country; Allah, as she recalls, is 'the creator and the ruler of the entire earth'.¹⁵ Tariq Ramadan also notes that the true essence of the Quran corresponds with cosmopolitan ideas: it encourages Muslims to value universal human goodness and respect cultural diversity.¹⁶ Ramadan further argues that orthodox Muslims can be cosmopolitan through critical thinking and active reflection: they should uphold only the essential Quranic ideas ('the universal principles to which the Muslim consciousness must seek to be faithful') and discard the marginal ones that incite intolerance and are no longer suitable to the current globalised condition.¹⁷ Ramadan's emphasis on the need for critical thinking and reflection among Muslims is closely related to what Roy says about personalised interpretations of Islam. As Roy observes, the late twentieth century has witnessed a 'widespread anti-intellectualism that favours a more emotional religiosity', and this is 'linked with individualism and with the crisis of intellectual authority'.¹⁸ This crisis of authority has other consequences too, where faith becomes more of a personal matter as responsibility for the interpretation of the Quran, which used to be dependent on clerics, now reverts to individual Muslims. In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Kaukab reflects on the contested elements within the Quran and starts to question which principle she ought to follow. Kaukab's doubt and reflection on the Quran reveal that even conservative Muslims in the diaspora begin to generate personalised interpretations of Islam, and this can represent a step towards

¹⁴ Osman Bakar, 'Islam's Destiny: A Bridge Between East and West', *JUST Commentary*, 33 (1996), 1-5 (p. 2).

¹⁵ Nadeem Aslam, *Maps for Lost Lovers*, (New York: Vintage, 2004), p. 31. In this chapter, further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

¹⁶ Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁷ Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, pp. 22-35.

¹⁸ Roy, *Globalized Islam*, p. 31.

openness and flexibility, which paves the way for cosmopolitanism.

However, this renewed relationship with Islam, which potentially facilitates cosmopolitanism, has its limitations. For example, Bryan Turner points out that an ongoing criticism of doctrine is often a partial one due to the adherence to an ultimate Truth. Like Ramadan and Roy, Turner observes cosmopolitan potential in critical reflections on Islam. However, describing what he calls 'reflexive traditionalism', Turner holds that orthodox Muslims are not epistemologically open and cannot generate 'vernacular hermeneutics of doubt' because they assume 'an unquestioned notion of revealed Truth that [has] exclusionary consequences'.¹⁹ In brief, the belief that Islam reveals an absolute Truth means that while other religions and cultures can be tolerated, they are nevertheless seen as inferior, with consequent challenges for the development of balanced and intersubjective relationships with people from other backgrounds. The obverse of Turner's argument provides a similar significant obstacle to achieving cosmopolitan connection: the worsening social-political environment in Muslim diasporic contexts since 9/11. As Paul Gilroy observes, in a climate of scepticism, the 'ordinary experiences of contact, cooperation, and conflict' across boundaries of race, culture, and ethnicity become a matter for suspicion and anxiety.²⁰ Muslims in western countries suffer much more from prejudice and unjust treatment in an atmosphere of Islamophobia. The hostile environment makes it unclear whether their individualised understanding of Islam will lead to cosmopolitanism or, in contrast, to even stronger confrontation and violence.

Maps for Lost Lovers represents Muslims' cosmopolitan impulses even within conservative forms, and their consequent dilemmas, but it also illustrates the resurgence of a non-mainstream form of Islam called Sufism, which has connections with cosmopolitanism. Peter Childs and James Green note that 'Islam ushers in a

¹⁹ Bryan Turner, 'The Cosmopolitanism of the Sacred', in *Routledge Handbook of Cosmopolitanism Studies*, ed. by Gerard Delanty (London: Routledge: 2012), pp. 188-197 (p. 192).

²⁰ Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p. viii.

Sufi devotional aesthetic in opposition to a more law-bound conception of Islam'.²¹ *Maps for Lost Lovers* employs poetic imagery that is connected with Sufism; the main character Shamas, as an imaginative and intuitive amateur poet, is also modelled on the Sufi poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz.²² As Annemarie Schimmel notes, Sufism is a mystic form of Islam that 'cannot be understood or explained by any normal mode of perception', and '[o]nly the wisdom of the heart, *gnosis*, may give insight into some of its aspects'.²³ Distinct from the western tradition that praises reason and rationality, Sufism emphasises individuals' intuitive and affective experiences and values people's direct connection with divinity through the journey of discovery. In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Shamas manages to see the divinity in ordinary people and establish a mystic connection with them: he exemplifies how Sufism promotes the generation of a fantastic cosmopolitan vision. The individualised and intuitive approach to divinity introduces new modalities of global connectedness by stressing doubt, discussion, criticism, and interpretation. Importantly, love is at the centre of Sufism. As Schimmel states, there is a 'strange and fascinating combination of human and divine love [that] permeates the verses of the mystics', and '[e]ventually, the nostalgia of the lover and the longing for the union [is] expressed by symbols taken from human love'.²⁴ The idea of love is at the centre of *Maps for Lost Lovers*, and it is linked with Sufism. Individuals' connections with divinity are attained through profane experiences of love in the real world: Sufi's pursuit of divine love manifests itself through a more world-affirming approach, since it acknowledges the spiritual possibilities of physical forms as revealed by, for instance, the human body and sexuality.

In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Shamas is not only a Sufi poet but represents liberal and elite Muslims who contribute to cosmopolitanism by creating hybridised forms of Islamic religion and culture. As Jocelyne Cesari notes, '[c]osmopolitanism is [a]

²¹ Peter Childs and James Green, *Aesthetics and Ethics in Twenty-First Century British Novels: Zadie Smith, Nadeem Aslam, Hari Kunzru and David Mitchell*, (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 190.

²² Childs and Green, *Aesthetics and Ethics in Twenty-First Century British Novels*.

²³ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), p. 4.

²⁴ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 5.

characteristic of a significant segment of the Muslim elite in the West'.²⁵ Elite Muslims – that is to say, those characterised by mobility, certain cultural values and literacies, and equipped to negotiate a globalised world – are cosmopolitan not only because they are transnational, but also and especially because, as Cesari point out, they are capable of 'combin[ing] cultural references of various registers that are more often described as antagonistic, namely those of the Muslim world and those of Western societies'.²⁶ In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Shamas has access to knowledge of both East and West and this alerts him to the compatibility between the two. As a Community Relations Council director, he helps other Muslims who know little English to negotiate with the white people in the community. Shamas also helps to create such hybridised spaces as the bookstore *Safeena* where an exchange of western and eastern ideas is made possible. In his endeavour to make Islam more liberal and critical, Shamas, to a large extent, illustrates how elite Muslims may promote the secularisation of Islam. However, it is also important to note the limitations of elite and liberal Muslims' reformative efforts. For instance, Saba Mahmood is critical of the discourse of secularism. Mahmood argues that the political solution that secularism proffers 'lies not so much in tolerating difference and diversity but in remaking certain kinds of religious subjectivities (even if this requires the use of violence) to render them compliant with the liberal political rule'.²⁷ In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Shamas is an illustration of what Mahmood describes: he is sympathetic to liberal political rule; he actively works to achieve it; he has had his religious subjectivities reworked, and he seeks to rework those of others, even by using violence. The novel foregrounds Shamas' flaws and limitations by portraying him as an over-romantic and even selfish person. Shamas' liberal discourses are all too often based on a hasty accusation that orthodox Muslims' faith is uncivilised and backward; his endeavour to liberate Kaukab from restrictive Islamic customs is even conducted

²⁵ Jocelyne Cesari, *Global Islam: Between Fundamentalism and Cosmopolitanism*, (Gordonville: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), p. 62.

²⁶ Cesari, *Global Islam*, p. 63.

²⁷ Saba Mahmood, 'Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation', *Public Culture*, 18.2 (2006), 323-347 (p. 328).

using violent coercion.

Maps for Lost Lovers also represents young Muslims who grow up in the western environment and relate to Islam differently from their parents, and this study of the novel explores how the young Muslims may pave the way for a cosmopolitan future. Muslim youths, as Kundnani notes, feel ‘distanced from the strong ethnic base which characterizes the mosque context associated with their parents’.²⁸ Kundnani further states that while their parents had ‘imbibed their religion through an oral tradition necessarily bound up with South Asian languages and poetry’, a new generation of Muslims acquired knowledge about Islam at home in English, on the printed page, and, later, on the internet.²⁹ Against that background, some young Muslims denounce their parents’ interpretation of Islam and instead claim the authority to develop their individualised interpretations of Islamic religion and culture. As Garbi Schmidt notes, Muslim youth may ‘criticize the *imams* for lacking knowledge of the country in which they had settled’ and consider ‘an autonomous interpretation and adaptation of Islam to their own lives important’.³⁰ Notably, although they appear to be westernised, Muslim youths still choose Islam even though they may have many other options; as Alison Shaw observes, ‘they are often still committed to cultural distinctiveness and upholding their community’s moral and religious identity’.³¹ The younger-generation Muslims are more apt to combine their western knowledge with traditional Islamic ideas that they have learnt from their parents, and they may contribute to cosmopolitanism by presenting new forms of Islam that are adaptable to the new globalised contexts.

Section One: Looking into the Diaspora – Dislocation and Dynamics

²⁸ Kundnani, ‘Islamism and the Roots of Liberal Rage’, pp. 56-57.

²⁹ Kundnani, ‘Islamism and the Roots of Liberal Rage’, p. 57.

³⁰ Garbi Schmidt, ‘Islamic Identity Formation among Young Muslims: The Case of Denmark, Sweden and the United States’, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 24.1 (2004), 31-45 (p. 36).

³¹ Alison Shaw, ‘The Pakistani Community in Oxford’, in *Desh Pardesh: the South Asian Presence in Britain*, ed. by R. Ballard (London: Hurst, 1994), 35-57 (p. 35).

Maps for Lost Lovers centres around a ghettoised Pakistani diaspora in Britain. This diaspora is characterised by loneliness and isolation, and within it, there seems to be no trace of vibrancy. As Tahir Abbas observes, British Muslim communities ‘have largely remained concentrated in the inner-city areas of older towns and cities’: South Asian immigrants, failing to move beyond the inner-city areas that they originally migrated to often for reasons of class disadvantage, tend to lead a life of immobility.³² The Pakistani diaspora in *Maps for Lost Lovers* mirrors Abbas’ observation. Situated in an unspecified English town, the ghettoised community is known as ‘Dasht-e-Tanhaii’ (Urdu for ‘the Wilderness of Solitude. The Desert of Loneliness’) (29). The residents of the locality of Dasht-e-Tanhaii do not have many chances to meet white English people since ‘[t]he whites were already moving out of here by the end of the 1970s’ (46). This is a community defined by social class, mainly populated by underprivileged and dispossessed people who have few opportunities to migrate to other places: ‘[d]octors, lawyers, accountants, engineers’ have all moved out, and only those who ‘work in restaurants, drive taxis and buses, or are unemployed’ have stayed (46). People merely struggle to survive and they tend to avoid contact with cultural and religious others both within the community and outside it. Although Dasht-e-Tanhaii is a hybrid place populated by a mixture of Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs, the residents appear to lead a life of segregation and insularity.

In his comments on *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Dave Gunning observes the depressing condition of the diaspora and maintains that the creation of this community, in the first place, was ‘no more than a cry of despair’.³³ However, it is equally important to note that senses of empowerment and traces of cosmopolitanism were embedded in Dasht-e-Tanhaii at the outset. Finding it ‘difficult to pronounce the English names’, immigrants of diverse backgrounds erased the original English names of every place in the town when they first arrived; having ‘re-christened everything they saw before

³² Tahir Abbas, ‘Muslim Minorities in Britain: Integration, Multiculturalism and Radicalism in the Post-7/7 Period’, *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 28.3 (2007), 287-300 (p. 289).

³³ Dave Gunning, *Race and Antiracism in Black British and British Asian Literature*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), p. 84.

them', they embarked on a mission of naming and renaming the places according to the names back in their home countries (28-9). As Claire Chambers remarks, this precise moment demonstrates a 'complex history of interchange between Europe and the subcontinent'.³⁴ The erasure of English names reflects the immigrants' efforts to claim authority in this new land and to leave their mark on it, since they no longer passively wait to be assimilated or integrated into the new culture. Various locations are recreated, which symbolises the transplanting of South Asian traditions and culture into the western context: '[a]s in Lahore, a road in this town is named after Goethe. There is a Park Street here as in Calcutta, a Malabar Hill as in Bombay, and a Naag Tolla Hill as in Dhaka' (28). The diverse renamed locations, being themselves a combination of various nationalities of the Subcontinent, together constitute a cosmopolitan space. Significantly, the process of renaming places continues: the neighbourhood is transformed into an 'enormous palimpsest' – to use Cordula Lemke's word – since the immigrants who come from across the Subcontinent have all lived together, and 'the name that one of them happened to give to a street or landmark was taken up by the others, regardless of where they themselves are from' (29).³⁵ The fact that each place has more than one name makes a confident categorisation impossible: it suggests that the process of immigration and resettlement does not simply entail the transplantation of one single tradition and culture but rather a combination of them, even though eventually the boundaries seem to have been redrawn 'according to the specific countries they are from' (29).

As Pnina Werbner notes, diasporas are 'scattered, uncontained and uncontainable minorities' that exist 'beyond the nation-state with its fixed boundaries and clearly defined categories of inclusion and exclusion'.³⁶ The dynamics within the diaspora are

³⁴ Claire Chambers, 'A Comparative Approach to Pakistani Fiction in English', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 47.2 (2011), 122-134.

³⁵ Cordula Lemke, 'Racism in the Diaspora: Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004)', in *Multi-Ethnic Britain 2000+: New Perspectives in Literature, Film and the Arts*, ed. by Eckstein, Lars., Barbara Korte, Eva Ulrike Pirker, and Christoph Reinhardt (New York: Rodopi, 2008), p. 172.

³⁶ Pnina Werbner, 'The Place Which is Diaspora: Citizenship, Religion and Gender in

revealed partly by how the first batches of immigrants leave their marks on the host country, but the English traces remain there, which reveals that the locality is not simply overwritten by a completely new culture, but is rather subject to cross-cultural influences from both. In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, the town is located at the base of a valley: '[a]t the very top are the remains of an Iron Age fort to which a tower was added to mark Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee' (10). Just as the Pakistani neighbourhood has been transformed into an 'enormous palimpsest', so marks of English culture have been preserved in the town as shown by the 'Iron Age fort' and are themselves palimpsestically written over by the tower that marks the Golden Jubilee. The fact that the English constructs exist adjacent to the Pakistani diaspora demonstrate that this immigrant community is never completely free of the influence of indigenous culture, and both show palimpsestic characteristics. The layout of the town also illustrates the overlapping boundaries between cultures; specifically, it reveals the mutual influences between Christianity and Islam. In the town, on one side of the street is 'the hundred-year-old Parish Church of St Eustace,' and 'on the other side of the street is the mosque' (9). The adjacency of the mosque and the church facilitates cultural exchanges: 'verses from the Bible are translated into Urdu' and they are 'regularly pinned to the noticeboard in the churchyard', even though the fact that 'they are torn down in the middle of the night just as regularly' reminds us that those exchanges may exist in the form of confrontation and resistance (28).

Within the diaspora, Muslim residents have developed new habits that hint at a growing distance from their past Islamic practice in Pakistan. As Arjun Appadurai observes, people 'move and must drag their imagination for new ways of living along with them': the experience of living in the diaspora is a condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations.³⁷ In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Muslim children walk on the frozen lake 'pretending to be Jesus' (4); when Shamas sees Kiran, the Sikh woman,

the Making of Chaordic Transnationalism', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 28.1 (2002), 119-133 (p. 121).

³⁷ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota, 1996), p. 6.

walking towards him from a distance, he imagines her to be ‘Queen Elizabeth II’ coming to fulfil the wishes of her people and bring prosperity to the community (4-5). Figures from British history and Christianity are prominent in the diasporic Muslims’ minds, and they are assimilated and their actions imitated by young Muslims: this illustrates that the novel’s Islamic faiths and practices come unavoidably under the influence of western religion and culture. Muslim characters attempt to adhere to conventional Islamic practices as they inhere in their home country, and yet they often fail. A person who migrates from Pakistan and now lives in Norway asks the cleric ‘whether it was permitted for him to take an occasional small glass of whisky or vodka to keep his blood warm’ because Norway, unlike Pakistan, is ‘an extremely cold country’ (9). In Australia, a despondent father asks the cleric to ‘fly immediately to Sydney all-expenses-paid’ and exorcise the djinns out of his teenage daughter because she seems to be possessed by evil spirits after ‘an end was put to her love for a white schoolmate and she was married to a cousin brought hurriedly over from Pakistan’ (9-10). The fact that the daughter falls in love with a white ‘schoolmate’, someone who is so proximate that she meets him almost every day, suggests the unavoidability of intercultural encounters and their ability to breach strongly demarcated cultural and even racial divides. In contrast, the Muslim father’s despondency (as illustrated by his demand for the cleric to ‘fly immediately’ to Sydney and by his bringing of the cousin ‘hurriedly’ over from Pakistan) exposes the difficulty in maintaining religious practices from their home country. As I have shown above, the Pakistani diaspora, despite attempts at preserving the status quo, undergoes constant transformation and this may give rise to new cultures in Islam modified by globalisation and cosmopolitanism.

Section Two: Religious Orthodoxies and Cosmopolitan Impulses – Domesticity, New Messages in the Quran, and Challenges

Through the portrayal of Shamas and Kaukab’s house, the novel reveals that the

domestic space, a space often reserved for first-generation migrant women such as Kaukab with a strong sense of Islamic tradition, is distinct from that in Pakistan and it potentially promotes the generation of new attitudes and practices within Islam. As Ayhan Kaya notes, Muslim women are largely ‘private women’ after they get married: they mainly stay in the domestic space, where their main role is to replicate Islamic communities ‘through complying with its customs, traditions and values’.³⁸ Yet in *Maps for Lost Lovers*, the new features of the domestic sphere illuminate the difficulty for Muslim women to preserve traditional Islamic culture. Missing ‘the heat and light of an extended family’ back in Pakistan, Kaukab finds the house unbearably empty: the novel introduces Kaukab with a depiction of her staying alone at home, ‘look[ing] out of the window’ and missing her children, who are all living apart from her (30-31). It has been ‘seven years and a month’ since the last time she saw her youngest child Ujala, and the other children, Mah-Jabin and Charag, are also distant from her (30-31). While Muslim women are normally valued as the guardians of the Islamic group, the loneliness of Kaukab indicates the lack of an audience for her lecturing in the domestic sphere, and it further illustrates her shattered role in social reproduction, in replicating and carrying on Islamic norms and conventions. Shamas and Kaukab’s house is a hybrid space that contains both eastern and western elements, and it potentially creates the condition for a globalised Islam. While the colours of the walls – blue, strawberry pink, and yellow – resemble those back in their hometown of Sohni Dharti, the ‘lobster buoy from Maine, USA’ that is used as a doorstopper to ‘let in the sun’ reveals how elements of western culture have been incorporated into the domestic space since their move to England (5-8). Besides the ‘framed verses of the Quran hanging on the walls’, there are also ‘books in five languages’ on the shelves; one lonely afternoon, Kaukab is intrigued to open these books, and she attempts to ‘see if she could find in any of them an explanation of her predicament’ (70). Portraying the house as a space of cultural hybridity, the novel demonstrates that the

³⁸ Ayhan Kaya, ‘Individualization and Institutionalization of Islam in Europe in the Age of Securitization’, *Insight Turkey*, (2010), 47-63 (p. 56).

conditions of deterritorialisation may create a desire for innovation and cross-border exploration, which potentially paves the way for further cosmopolitan expression within Islam.

Living in the diaspora, orthodox Muslim women seek to alleviate their feelings of loneliness through an individualised interpretation of the Quran, and their reading of the Quran makes manifest the cosmopolitan messages embedded in Islam. In the novel, Kaukab feels as if she does not belong to any place in this foreign country: living a life of isolation, she expresses her misery as ‘her children [are] in England’, her ‘soul in Arabia’, and her heart wherever Jugnu and Chanda – the missing couple – are (146). The Quran is Kaukab’s only companion in this lonely place: importantly, in her daily routine of reading the Quran, Kaukab starts to reflect on her hostility towards England and develops a more tolerant view of her surroundings, which she previously resented. Kaukab realises that her dissatisfaction with England is a slight to Allah because He is the creator and ruler of the entire earth: she often reminds herself that ‘Allah had given Adam his name after the Arabic word *adim*, which means “the surface of the earth”; he – and therefore the whole of mankind, his descendants – was created from earth taken from different parts of the world’ (31). Kaukab relieves her feelings of discontentment and anxiety by remembering her faith in Allah, who has sympathy for all human beings. An individualised interpretation of Islam also encourages her to envision an imaginary *Ummah* which is not confined by any particular society or territory because, as Kaukab recalls, ‘the stone carving of Allah’s words on Islamabad airport’ should give condolences to all Pakistani immigrants in the world (31).

Kaukab not only notes the cosmopolitan elements embedded in Islam but also begins to realise and contemplate some of its self-contradictory contents. Living in the diaspora means that Kaukab witnesses and experiences more cases than before that violate Islamic customs: one of them is the forbidden marriage between Jugnu and Chanda, which eventually leads to their tragic deaths. Before meeting Jugnu, Chanda had been through three failed marriages, and the third husband, an illegal immigrant in the UK, did not divorce her. Chanda’s cohabitation with Jugnu thus violates Islamic

conventions because Chanda did not get a proper divorce. As a devout Muslim, Kaukab insists that the couple must not live together before marriage, and she urges Chanda to ‘move out of Jugnu’s house’ (62). Strictly following Islamic practices, Kaukab demands that Chanda should ‘obtain a *Muslim* divorce and marry Jugnu *Islamically*’ (55). However, although Kaukab faithfully follows Islamic doctrine and objects to Muslims’ premarital cohabitation, she is tormented by an equally powerful Islamic message that contradicts the previous one that she has been adhering to. As Kaukab recalls, Islam also tells them that ‘everyone loved someone before marriage’: love is a ‘phenomenon as old and sacred as Adam and Eve’, and it ‘did not even begin with humans and animals ... Allah Himself was a being in love with His own creations’ (64). As Ramadan suggests, Muslims must separate the essential Islamic messages from the marginal ones: they need to distinguish between ‘the universal principles to which the Muslim consciousness must seek to be faithful through the ages’ and ‘the practice of those principles’.³⁹ *Maps for Lost Lovers* dramatises Kaukab’s struggle to come to terms with the self-contradictory Islamic doctrines, a process through which cosmopolitan sentiments arise. Kaukab acknowledges that ‘[s]he has objected to Chanda moving in with Jugnu, but she is not heartless and hadn’t disapproved of their love’ (33). It eventually comes to light that the couple has become the victims of an honour killing, and their tragic deaths are one main reason for Kaukab’s ensuing reflections on Islam. The rise of cosmopolitan sentiment is shown by Kaukab’s retrospective invocation of the Islamic idea of ‘universal love’. Kaukab recalls that ‘[e]ven in Pakistan everyone loved someone before marriage’; she begins to note that love is a concept that should be applied in both eastern and western contexts, and ‘the West just gave a person the permission and opportunity to *act* on those feelings’ (313).

Representing the tension between Kaukab’s faith in the absolute Truth and her emerging critical reflections on Islam, the novel further demonstrates a process whereby orthodox Muslims begin to criticise and even discard certain Islamic

³⁹ Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, p. 22.

precepts and practices. As Turner notes, orthodox Muslims believe in ‘an unquestioned notion of revealed Truth’ – in their minds, Allah’s words are the Truth.⁴⁰ In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Kaukab is convinced that Allah ‘gave her everything’ and she is not in the position to question Allah (43). The fact that she ‘feels herself being watched from above’ shows her faith in the sacred power that exists beyond the secular world and continuously monitors her behaviour (259). Kaukab constantly reminds herself of the unquestionable nature of Allah’s words, repeatedly enhancing her faith by saying ‘that’s Allah’s law and who are we to question it?’ or ‘it is not our place to say “Why” or “How” to Him’ (333). However, it is important to note that Kaukab’s frequent need to remind herself that she cannot question Allah also, paradoxically, exposes her growing inclination to question Allah: it indicates that rebellious thoughts can only be temporarily repressed when Kaukab gives herself psychological cues through constant self-questioning. It becomes increasingly clear that Kaukab is not blindly following Islamic law but rather has developed her own critical thinking. She represents the way that, as Katherine Brown argues, Muslim women are ‘locating Islam in the holy texts of Islam and denying authenticity to practices developed in Muslim history’.⁴¹ For instance, while some clerics maintain that ‘angels or the spirits of holy figures cannot be seen by women who are inferior to men’, Kaukab objects to such a statement as she recalls that ‘Moses’s mother has received a divine message from Allah’ (333). She also refutes the idea that ‘Islam is set to forbid music’ because she remembers the Muslim girls who have welcomed the holy Prophet Mohammed by ‘playing the *duff* drums and singing *Tala’al-Badru ‘Alayna*’ (290). Kaukab’s individualised interpretation of Islam enables her to reject certain Islamic norms and conventions that she believes to be a misinterpretation of authentic Islamic ideas. By claiming the authority to develop personalised interpretations of Islam, Muslim women such as Kaukab begin to gain agency and

⁴⁰ Turner, ‘The Cosmopolitanism of the Sacred’, p. 192.

⁴¹ Katherine Brown, ‘Realising Muslim Women’s Rights: The Role of Islamic Identity among British Muslim Women’, *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 29.4 (2006), 417-430 (p. 422).

freedom. The novel represents the occasions on which Kaukab violates Islamic law even though she perceives it to be Allah's words. For instance, Kaukab remembers when she was a young girl and joked with her friends that 'they shouldn't throw any fruit from the secret land of Arabia just because of a minor impurity' (291). Nonetheless, when she was preparing food for the family reunion in England, she discarded the insect-riddled dates that she brought from Pakistan, which symbolised her departure from her previous strongly-held beliefs (291). Her 'throw[ing] the date stones into the rose beds' in the backyard and the prospect of their germination next year allude to the transplanted Islam on British soil, which illustrates a promising cosmopolitan vision (292).

However, *Maps for Lost Lovers* also illustrates how Muslims' nuanced and dynamic relationship with Islam goes largely unnoticed by the people around them, who tend to hastily accuse them of being stubborn and even uncivilised. Years before meeting Chanda, Jugnu invited his girlfriend, a white English woman, to Kaukab and Shamas' house. Exchanging views about science and religion, Shamas told Jugnu's English girlfriend that he was still inclined to believe in science because, 'unlike the prophets, [scientists] readily admit that they are *working towards* an answer, they don't have the *final* and absolute answer' (38). Nonetheless, as I have already mentioned, Muslims' relationship with Islam – even in the case of more dogmatic worshippers like Kaukab – is not static or fixed. They do not have a '*final* and absolute answer', as is shown by their diverse interpretations of Islam, and they have also been 'working towards an answer' in their endeavour to adapt Islam to the globalised context. Shamas' off-hand denunciation of religion reveals his ignorance of other Muslims' complex interactions with Islam as well as his lack of awareness of their cosmopolitan potential. As Tariq Modood has commented, with reference to the Rushdie Affair: '[i]t was not the exploration of religious doubt but the lampooning of the Prophet that provoked the anger'.⁴² In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Shamas' praise for science is based on his contempt for and even insults to Muhammad, the Prophet, and

⁴² Tariq Modood, *Multicultural Politics: Racism, Ethnicity, and Muslims in Britain*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), p. 106.

this is the predominant trigger for Kaukab's rage. In their conversation, Shamas carelessly remarks on Muhammad, the Prophet, saying that he could not be expected to believe 'what an illiterate merchant-turned-opportunistic-preacher – for he was no systematic theologian – in the seventh-century Arabian desert has to say about the origin of life' (38). Enraged by Shamas' insult to the Prophet, Kaukab, who has previously been preparing food for the guests, arranges four shoes on a tray, rushing out of the kitchen and pouring the food into the shoes in front of Jugnu's girlfriend, Jugnu, and Shamas (40). Quarrelling with Shamas, Kaukab exclaims 'I want you to listen to me' and 'take me seriously': Kaukab's protest reveals Muslims' demand for acknowledgement of, and respect for, their religion and culture (40).

In the diasporic community, orthodox Muslims suffer much more than others from prejudice and unjust treatment, and this is especially the case in an atmosphere of Islamophobia. In the novel, Kaukab is largely misunderstood by her husband Shamas, who values liberal ideas; her children, who have grown up in England, also harshly criticise her faith in Islam without sufficiently understanding her dilemma. Ujala accuses his mother of 'chanting the words' in the Quran without knowing their meaning: using the offensive adjective 'barbaric' in pointing out the demerits of Islam, he asks Kaukab, '[a]mputations, stoning to death, flogging – not barbaric?' (322). When Mah-Jabin condemns her mother for not seeking more freedom, she also fails to recognise the predicament of Kaukab, who does not have 'the freedom to walk away from a way of life' as Mah-Jabin expects her to (115). Once, in a conflict between mother and daughter, Mah-Jabin compared Kaukab to a cold-blooded murderer and exclaimed that 'here we have proof that Chanda was murdered by her brothers, that a family can kill one of its own' (114). Although it was largely unintentional, such an accusation bears certain resemblances to the mainstream discourse of 'war on terror' after 9/11 that dehumanises Muslims and denounces them as barbaric and uncivilised. In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, a Muslim girl in America is 'handcuffed by police for wearing her head-to-toe veil': it shows that against the background of Islamophobia, ordinary peaceful Muslims can be easily mistaken as terrorists and become victims of the 'war on terror' (107). Ordinary experiences of

contact, co-operation, and conflict across boundaries of race, culture, and ethnicity are rendered suspicious in a climate of scepticism, and this is an obstacle to cosmopolitanism.

As Turner observes, orthodox Muslims tend to establish ‘walls of piety’ to prevent their religion and culture from being further eclipsed.⁴³ In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Muslims are inclined to establish such symbolic walls through gossip with other Muslims within the community. As Roy Baumeister, Liqing Zhang, and Kathleen Vohs note, gossip serves to ‘convey information about social norms and other guidelines for behavior’: it not only educates the hearer about social norms but also affirms them.⁴⁴ Gossip within the community functions to enhance traditional Islamic beliefs and curb rebellious thoughts. In the novel, although Kaukab is secretly sympathetic to Chanda and Jugnu, the matchmaker (while paying a visit to Kaukab) gossips about Chanda’s loss of chastity. The matchmaker comments, ‘what a shameless girl she was, sister-ji, so brazen’, and she icily asks Kaukab ‘how did you, Kaukab, manage to tolerate it, you who are a cleric’s daughter – born and brought up in a mosque all your life’ (42). The prejudice and resentment against English people are also reinforced through gossip within the circle of orthodox Muslims. When Kaukab remarks, ‘the white police are interested in us Pakistanis only when there is a chance to prove that we are savages’, the matchmaker concurs with Kaukab and follows it by saying ‘Imagine, they flew all the way to Pakistan just to be able to brand us Pakistanis murderers’ (41). *Maps for Lost Lovers* demonstrates that many similar views on English people being evil and hostile are obtained and strengthened through the gossip among orthodox Muslims within the community. While their gossip partly reflects reality, it mainly serves to strengthen normative Islamic laws and practices and it blocks the way to cross-cultural communication.

The novel shows that orthodox Muslims are not completely unwilling to make contact with English people or to consider liberal ideas, but an enormous obstacle

⁴³ Turner, ‘The Cosmopolitanism of the Sacred’, p. 193.

⁴⁴ Roy Baumeister, Liqing Zhang, and Kathleen D. Vohs, ‘Gossip as Cultural learning’, *Review of General Psychology*, 8.2 (2004), 111-121 (p. 113).

they confront is their limited knowledge of English. When first migrating to England, Kaukab aspired to integrate into the western community and she told Shamas that ‘she planned to enrol in an English-learning course’ (32). However, Kaukab does not have the kind of solid educational background that would enable her to master a new language – she has ‘had no schooling beyond the age of eleven’ (32). The English words that Kaukab overhears every day are mostly meaningless to her, and what she writes down in the notebook are ‘words whose meanings she didn’t know, proverbs jumbled up, sayings mistakenly glued to other sayings’ (32). Unlike her children, who have taken English lessons at school, Kaukab does not manage to take an English course as she planned, and her command of English never goes beyond elementary level. Consequently, Kaukab often fails to communicate effectively with English people. When Jugnu’s ex-girlfriend, a white English woman, comes to the house, Kaukab secretly craves cross-cultural communications as she anxiously ‘practise[s] her English in the mirror’ before her arrival (34). However, although she has a cosmopolitan impulse, Kaukab’s effort to catch up with her English is in vain; while Shamas, Jugnu, and the English woman are talking in English, their conversation proceeds at a pace that is ‘too fast for [Kaukab] to keep up’ (37). There was even an occasion on which Kaukab and the English woman may have established a deeper mutual understanding if there were no language barrier: Kaukab was invited into their conversation as the English woman does not regard science as superior to religion and said that ‘the rational explanations of how the universe began are just as shaky’ (38). However, the cosmopolitan moment does not materialise: only knowing a few English words, Kaukab stays in the kitchen throughout the discussion and has no confidence to meet the stranger. In the novel, Aslam foregrounds the lack of communication between Muslims and non-Muslim English people due to the language barrier. During the family reunion that Charag attends with his former English wife Stella, Kaukab wishes she could express her thoughts in English ‘so that Stella would know she was intelligent, a thinking person’: this demonstrates Muslim women’s craving to change western people’s stereotypical impressions of them (313). Yet Kaukab’s lack of proficiency in English leads to a prolonged misunderstanding between them. As

Kaukab recalls, she missed the chance to reconcile with Stella after their conflict: she did not manage to take the train to meet Stella because she feared she would get lost on the way ‘as she searched for the correct platform, too humiliated by her pronounced accent and broken words to ask someone to guide her to the connecting trains’ (313). Rather than profound philosophical or religious differences precluding cosmopolitanism, it is the lack of a common language and anxieties around linguistic competence that prevent Muslim women such as Kaukab from connecting with others.

Section Three: Mystical and Aesthetic Islam, and Fantastic Cosmopolitanism

In contrast to a law-bounded relationship with Islam, Shamas, as a melancholic and reflective person, seeks to discover the idea of universality through a mystic and aesthetic approach to Islam. This is demonstrated by Shamas’ closeness to the Sufi idea of ‘annihilation’ when he greets the snow and contemplates his diasporic situation when he is first introduced in the novel. As Schimmel notes, ‘annihilation’ in Sufism is an important step towards reunification with God, and it conveys the meaning of universality.⁴⁵ Schimmel observes that ‘the mystic no longer goes straight on [a man’s] Path toward God: first he has to experience annihilation in the spiritual guide, who functions as the representative of the Prophet’; ‘*Fand*, “annihilation,” is not the ultimate goal, but *baqd*, “remaining”, a new life in God’.⁴⁶ *Maps for Lost Lovers* opens with Shamas standing at the threshold of the house and greeting the season’s first snow in England. The way Aslam portrays the snowy scene resonates with the Sufi idea of annihilation: the earth is compared to a magnet ‘pulling snowflakes out of the sky’, which symbolises God’s indiscriminate love towards all living creatures. Drawn by the earth, the snowflakes ‘fall like feathers sinking into the water’, which symbolises the annihilation of self and an ultimate connection with the universe (3). The snowflake in England reminds Shamas of the monsoon raindrop back in Pakistan that has been lost since he migrated here. In parallel with the earth’s

⁴⁵ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*.

⁴⁶ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 216, p. 59.

pulling snowflakes to its bosom, Shamas greets the snow 'with an arm stretched out to receive the small light piece on his hand', transforming the 'crystals of snow ... into a monsoon raindrop' (5). The parallel between the snowflakes sinking into the water and the snowflakes melting in Shamas' palms alludes to the inseparability of the Sufi idea of 'annihilation' in the realm of divinity and that in the secular world. The Sufi notion of 'annihilation' in nature is embodied in, and made manifest by, Shamas. The scene conveys the meaning of reunification and creativity: Shamas' stretching of his arms to the sky suggests a merging with others in a universal gesture, and his endeavour to reconnect with the English environment is shown by the snowflakes melting in his open palms and being transformed into a new being – the 'monsoon raindrop' in Pakistan.

Mystical Islam enables people to take a cosmopolitan view of life and death: it inspires Shamas, who begins to realise that what has been lost cannot be retrieved by repeating Islamic practices from back in Pakistan which are rendered obsolete by transposition into a new context. Images of loss and death pervade the novel: a 'dead finch' is buried deep in the snow (3); a 'towering giant', in legend, falls from the sky and sinks in the lake (4); the feather of a dead bird, with 'a diamond in its beak', is 'stuck in the whiteness' (20). Those who are lost and dead, buried deep in the earth, cannot be resurrected: as Shamas observes, 'the universe is without saviours: the surface of the earth is a great shroud whose dead will not be resurrected' (20). Shamas' perception of the earth reflects his belief in mystical Islam and his cosmopolitan view of life and death: the earth, as a 'great shroud whose dead will not be resurrected', gestures towards the reunification with the entire world rather than with a particular country or territory. In contrast, the novel shows that the attempt to resurrect the dead, which violates the Sufi idea, tends to be fruitless. In the novel, Shamas cannot repress his extreme grief when he thinks of Jugnu's and Chanda's deaths; thrusting his fingers into the snow, he imagines he could dig the dead body out of the snow. In its mad state of grief, Shamas' mind convinces itself that there could be a 'half-penny coin' buried in the snow – the coins which were once used in Pakistan but are now 'discontinued' and out of circulation (20). In his fantasy, 'to be able to locate just one

of those copper discs' buried in the snow would 'solve every difficulty in life' (20-21). The half-penny coin symbolises the memories carried from Pakistan; dramatising Shamas' failed attempt to discover the 'half-penny coin' buried in the snow, the novel demonstrates that the idea of resurrection is connected with a nostalgia for a lost past that cannot be recovered.

Rather than a particular emphasis on or privileging of reason and rationality, in mystical and aesthetic Islam individuals' intuitive and affective experiences are foregrounded, which prompts cosmopolitanism. In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Shamas, who relates to people in a sensory and intuitive manner, manages to comprehend others' suffering and their plights in a non-verbal way. The novel reveals the limits of language when Shamas sets out to solve other residents' problems: when Kiran, the Sikh woman, talks about the difficulties faced by her family, Shamas 'wants to say something in response' but fails to express himself in speech (9). On the contrary, Shamas' compassion for Kiran is conveyed non-verbally: it is shown by his assistance to Kiran in lifting her father onto the bed; it is also shown by Shamas' rumination over the fact that Kiran and her baby share a name, which conveys a cosmopolitan message – 'Kiran, it being a name acceptable to both Sikhs and Muslims' (13). Non-verbal and affective experiences, such as meditation, smell and touch, enable Shamas to comprehend and empathise with other Muslims' affliction and misery. The sensuous experience is foregrounded during his conversation with Chanda's mother when she, in deep sorrow, struggles to maintain the illusion that Jugnu and Chanda are still alive. In their conversation, Shamas notices that 'the sun lights up the course of tears' and he feels as if his distance from Chanda's mother is reduced as 'colored motes fill the sunlit distance between him and her' (78). Feeling the breeze coming from her direction, Shamas shares the same sorrow with Chanda's mother when he realises that 'the sorrow he had sensed within him earlier was partly due to the woman's smell – the mother *smells* like the daughter' (78). *Maps for Lost Lovers* further shows the rising sentiment of fantastic cosmopolitanism by representing how Shamas sees divinity in ordinary people and develops a mysterious connection with them. In the novel, the cross-religious love between a Muslim girl and a Hindu boy could not be

accepted by orthodox Muslims, and the Muslim girl is later tragically beaten to death by the cleric. At the funeral, Shamas sees the Hindu boy wandering in moonlit darkness; in a mystic moment, he imagines that the boy's skin has the same blue colour as the god Krishna – 'the color of Krishna, the god who multiplied himself a thousand times so he could be with the thousand maidens simultaneously in the night forest – and so all lovers are one' (195-196). Shamas' imagination and fantasy demonstrate how he sees the divinity embodied in ordinary human beings. In the moonlight, Shamas and the Hindu boy manage to see the reflections of their own images in one another, and this gestures towards an intersubjective and cosmopolitan moment where they better understand themselves through others' perspectives.

Shamas' mystical and aesthetic approach to Islam also enables him to realise the violence that he once inflicted on his wife Kaukab and makes him see the larger scale of the picture. When the third child Ujala was born, Kaukab saw him as a blessed child who was 'marked by Allah for an exemplary virtuous existence in the world' (139). Dozens of people came to see the blessed baby; however, from Shamas' perspective, the visits and the visitors are 'a headache' and their collective ritual is incomprehensible to him. What utterly enrages Shamas is that Kaukab stops feeding the baby during her fasting: noticing the baby has lost weight and become 'increasingly unresponsive to noise and other sensation', he demands Kaukab to stop fasting and feed Ujala (142). Using violence, Shamas eventually manages to make Kaukab feed Ujala when she 'picks up the baby and nurses him'; however, the gulf between Shamas and Kaukab becomes even wider as a result (139). It is only after Shamas' epiphanic moment in the seafood shop that he initiates a reconciliation with Kaukab after months of separation: his half-dreaming state reveals his mysterious approach to Islam and symbolises a direct connection with the divinity. Pondering his past fight with Kaukab, Shamas, in a hallucinatory state of mind, witnesses the seafood store turning into 'a kaleidoscope brightly filled with black-and-cobalt-blue fragments whose reflections produced changing patterns on everything, including himself' (143). Shamas' experience in the seafood shop makes him realise the violence that he inflicted on Kaukab. The 'kaleidoscope' – an optical instrument with

multiple reflecting surfaces tilted towards each other at an angle – offers Shamas an ever-changing and fragmented perspective, through which he begins to notice his previous neglect of, and unfair treatment of, his wife. The winkles themselves, meanwhile, try to escape the tank and make slow voyages to the sea; their desire for emancipation from confined spaces and desire to reunite with the larger world convey a powerful message of cosmopolitanism that underlines Shamas' moment of openness even to ideas he has found alien.

Importantly, Shamas is not only a Muslim poet but a Community Relations Council director: his intuitive and aesthetic connection to Islam does not simply contribute to his fantastic cosmopolitanism at a personal level; it is also endowed with wider socio-political significance because of Shamas' active engagement with public spheres. As Cesari notes, 'cosmopolitan leaders are more commonly drawn from the intellectual sphere'.⁴⁷ As a decently educated Muslim poet, Shamas is aware that artists have the responsibility to 'light up the distance between two human beings' and to tell people 'what's truly worth living for, and dying for, in life' (13, 168). Before marriage, Shamas used to express his love for Kaukab by inscribing poems 'at the margin of the literary section' of the newspaper: the newspaper represents a public realm, and the love poems inscribed in the newspaper symbolise how elite Muslims' rebellious thoughts are expressed in the public realm (67). Shamas' poems encourage Kaukab to rebel against the arranged marriage stipulated by Islamic tenets: touched by the poems, Kaukab embroiders the lines of the poems into her wedding-day clothes, hoping to '[precipitate] a crisis that would bring her engagement to an end' (68). The symbolic connection between aesthetics and politics is also shown by the typewriter that Shamas brings from Pakistan to England with the hope of publishing his poems. Although Shamas has not fulfilled his wish, his brother Jugnu manages it for him – he uses the typewriter and produces his work for the local newspaper *The Afternoon* (18). The novel shows that Shamas is not merely a melancholic person preoccupied with private concerns, since he plays an active role in the public sphere. As a Community

⁴⁷ Cesari, *Global Islam: Between Fundamentalism and Cosmopolitanism*, p. 63.

Relations Council director, Shamas is the person who other residents turn to when they encounter difficulties. With two doors '[giving] on to the outside world at the front and back', Shamas' house is the place where he offers help to neighbours who can bring 'the problem openly to his front door' (15). Being socially engaged, Shamas combines his concern for aesthetics with that for politics, and he contributes to creating a hybrid space for exchange in which diverse ideas can circulate.

Literary discussions at the lakeside bookstore *Safeena* establish the basis for a friendship between Shamas and Suraya, a Muslim divorcee who plots to temporarily marry Shamas and divorce him later because only in this way, according to Islamic law, can she remarry her husband and reunite with her child in Pakistan. In the novel, *Safeena* is a hybridised space where both Islamic and western literature is displayed and for sale; it is operated by Shamas after he takes it over from a friend who has returned to Pakistan (152). Cesari notes that 'the function of dissemination and transmission ... is perhaps the Muslim elite's most important role': Shamas helps to create a space where people can exchange ideas and, further, establish cross-border connections.⁴⁸ Shamas first meets Suraya on his way to *Safeena*; later on, they regularly see each other in the bookstore, checking books and exchanging their views on literature. Shamas' literary exchanges with Suraya in *Safeena* make him feel that to meet Suraya 'is to meet oneself', or to find a kindred soul (155). While Suraya recalls a recital given by the exiled socialist Wamaq Saleem, Shamas cites Syed Aabid Ali Aabid's verses in answer to his self-doubts about whether he has done enough 'to condemn the pernicious excesses' of the criminals who took the lives of Jugnu and Chanda (211). Reciprocally, Shamas' 'melancholy voice singed [Suraya's] heart' while he reads the line '*I did warn: the prison out there has been expanded slowly, and now its walls have almost reached your own garden*' (211). Exchanging literary opinions in *Safeena* offers Suraya an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of Shamas: she is touched by Shamas' selfless concern for others and begins to question the moral implications of her fraudulent marriage to him. For a moment, she aspires to

⁴⁸ Cesari, *Global Islam, Between Fundamentalism and Cosmopolitanism*, p. 63.

break away from the course of action which sees her attempting to satisfy Islamic law, and wishes to develop a more intimate relationship with Shamas than she feels would be permissible by those rules (211).

The bookstore *Safeena* is also the space where Shamas and Jugnu used to search for literary references to moths and butterflies. Through the parallel imageries of the moth and the butterfly that appear in both Islamic and English books, the novel foregrounds the common traits shared by both Islamic and western aesthetics, which further illustrates the blurred boundaries between East and West. As Aslam explains, moths are ‘a link to Islamic literature, one of whose central themes is the quest for the beloved. Man’s search for his lover is his soul seeking God’.⁴⁹ Being linked with the Islamic tradition, moths are important insects that frequently appear in *Maps for Lost Lovers*; notably, an insect that is similar to the moth – the butterfly – appears just as frequently in the novel, which serves as a morphed version of the typical Islamic image. The resemblances between the moth and the butterfly make it hard to distinguish between the two (especially on the printed page, where the colours are lost): it demonstrates that Islam in an age of globalisation has both maintained its conventional form and has been reshaped and under constant transformation in the western context. In the bookstore *Safeena*, Shamas and Jugnu search for and discuss literary representations of moths and butterflies, both of which have been featured in classic western literature. Whereas ‘there is no reference to butterflies in the Bible’, Jugnu manages to find butterflies in the Urdu translation of *Madame Bovary* – ‘the only butterflies in here are the ones in there’ (47, 164). Similarly, Jugnu goes to the bookstore to ask if there is an Urdu-language *Ulysses*, and he asserts that there is an ‘actual moth’ depicted in the novel (137). By showing the imagery of moths and butterflies that appears in European classics, the novel foregrounds the intertextual connections between Islamic and European literature, and it further demonstrates the blurred boundaries between cultures, which mutually influence each other.

Safeena lies at the margins of, but distantly linked into, a global cultural

⁴⁹ Aslam, ‘Nadeem Aslam: A Question of Honour’.

marketplace for a mystic and aesthetic Islam, and circulation in that marketplace gives rise to certain forms of cosmopolitan connection. This is illustrated by the devotional singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's concert of Sufi music, which gathers together audience members from diverse backgrounds and offers a chance to build cross-border relationships. Nusrat is the descendant of a holy man in the Faisalabad region of Pakistan, and in the novel, he is referred to 'by one London critic *as the best and most-powerful singer in the world today*' (184). Having an international influence, Nusrat's Sufi concert, which is held annually in England, is an event popular among all the residents in the Pakistani diaspora. The novel's depiction of Nusrat's Sufi concert exemplifies Pnina Werbner's observation of the cosmopolitan nature of Sufi regional orders: as Werbner notes, 'disciples may follow more than one saint, attend more than one annual *'urs* festival ... attend the festivals of another saint, even from a different Sufi order'.⁵⁰ In the novel, the 'awe-inspiring voice will perform its ecstatic songs in a white moonlit marquee behind the lakeside house, to an audience of all-comers'; Nusrat's concert gathers together audience members from diverse backgrounds, which offers an opportunity to break the boundaries between people who normally stay only within their distinct social circles (184-5). Carl Morris highlights the cosmopolitan aspects of such social gatherings in Britain where people collectively listen to and appreciate Sufi music. As Morris points out, '[w]hile there is no doubt that these feelings of spirituality are rooted in their Islamic faith, there nonetheless appeared to be the identification of a spiritual "connection" between these artists and members of their audience – an audience that is often constituted by a range of faith backgrounds'.⁵¹ In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Aslam foregrounds the direct spiritual connection between Nusrat and the audience members by showing how Nusrat manages to 'be' and 'become' the characters in his songs. It is suggested that 'Nusrat is in the Thal desert of Southern Pakistan', 'he is the beautiful Sassi', and

⁵⁰ Werbner, 'Seekers on the Path: Different Ways of Being a Sufi in Britain', *Sufism in the West*, (2006), 127-141 (p. 127).

⁵¹ Carl Morris, "'Look into the Book of Life": Muslim Musicians, Sufism and Postmodern Spirituality in Britain', *Social Compass*, 63.3 (2016), 389-404, (p. 397).

later on ‘Nusrat’s voice has now *become* the fabled Heer’ (189, 191, emphasis added). By making himself the embodiment of those figures, Nusrat reduces the distance between himself and the audience. During the concert, ‘[f]aces, akin as coins in their attentiveness, are turned towards him’, which conveys a sense of universality: it represents a cosmopolitan moment when the boundaries between audience members begin to disappear as they collectively appreciate Nusrat’s music (187). The experience of listening to Sufi music sanctions in audiences the sense of catharsis and solace. Hearing the music, a girl in the audience is moved to tears, ‘weeping to herself as Nusrat sings in a pain-filled voice’ and reflecting on her affliction and misery (189). The women – who are previously strangers to her – ‘hold her, striving to console’, which shows that the Sufi concert is a site that generates an unexpected intimacy between strangers based on immediate common experience (189).

Section Four: Challenges to Cosmopolitanism – Fantasy and Reality; Aesthetics and Politics

Despite the outlook described above, *Maps for Lost Lovers* also warns of the danger of an over-romantic and idealised cosmopolitanism: casting Shamas as a melancholic and indecisive person, the novel shows how he tends to neglect the actual sufferings of the Muslims nearby and often fails to offer concrete help. Spending much time on thinking and meditating, Shamas has little communication with his wife Kaukab when they are at home: on the weekends, they simply stay in the room quietly, ‘each going about his or her own habits at the periphery of the other’s consciousness’ (55). While Shamas regularly checks out the newspapers and is concerned about the events that happen elsewhere in the world, he does not even remember the birthday of his own wife, who has to eat ‘the old piece of cooked fish in the fridge’ alone on her birthday (64). The stiff and cold fish that ‘ought to be thrown away’ is a reminder of Kaukab’s lonely and isolated situation, of which Shamas is oblivious; only when she catches a fishbone in her throat and is sent to the hospital does Shamas realise that the day was

Kaukab's birthday (64). Just as Shamas fails to notice and reduce his wife's loneliness at home, so he does not provide much concrete help to other Muslims in the community. Although Shamas appears to be a compassionate person when he pictures their predicaments in his mind, he tends simply to imagine the enormity of the challenges he is to confront while being reluctant to take substantial action. For instance, despite the fact that Shamas is sympathetic to Chanda's mother, he is hesitant to offer his companionship by walking home together with her: he ponders 'what people [would] think if they saw her walking beside a man not her husband at this early hour' and worries that 'if someone has seen them talking there is already a possibility of gossip' (78). Likewise, during his meetings with Suraya, Shamas constantly worries if they have been followed or are being watched by malicious people – 'he is concerned for her safety: she shouldn't be seen talking to a stranger' (136). Despite his compassion and his resolution to help other Muslim residents, Shamas often cannot concretely support them and solve their practical problems and concerns for reasons of his own weakness of resolve or character.

Shamas has a romanticised vision of an elite, cosmopolitan Islam: this can be seen in his easy association of Suraya's loosened scarf with her hidden desire for liberation, which turns out to be his own illusion created by his stereotypical outlook. Criticising the 'rhetoric of the veil' in western discourses, Claire Dwyer observes that the veil is almost always 'the symbol of Islamic backwardness and primitive[ness]'; in such discourses, Muslim women who wear veils are believed to be the victims of oppression who desperately wait to be emancipated.⁵² In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Suraya's loosened scarf has a similar symbolic meaning as the veil. On his way to *Safeena*, Shamas sees a red scarf – 'a piece of red cloth with a silken sheen, giving off a pronounced honeysuckle' – that is about to fall into the river; catching the scarf in time, he returns it to its owner, Suraya (135). Narrating the scene from Shamas' perspective, Aslam demonstrates how Shamas hastily and romantically links the

⁵² Claire Dwyer, 'Veiled Meanings: Young British Muslim Women and the Negotiation of Differences', *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 6.1 (1999), 5-26 (p.18).

loosened scarf with Suraya's hidden longing for liberation. The colour 'red' conveys the meaning of passion and desire, and the fact that the scarf is blown away by the wind is a powerful image of liberation and freedom – in Shamas' mind, it symbolises Suraya's desire to challenge normative Islamic practices of covering up Muslim women's bodies. However, the novel exposes the irony of Shamas' romanticised cosmopolitan vision by later revealing that Suraya's loosening of her scarf, from the very beginning, is a ploy to trap him into a temporary marriage with her. Suraya knows liberal Muslims' stereotypical impressions of veils and headscarves, and she takes advantage of her knowledge. In this light, the loosened scarf does not symbolise liberation but rather conformity to Islamic norms and conventions. Taking advantage of Shamas' romanticised vision, Suraya proceeds to talk with him, making him believe that 'she's delaying him on purpose' and 'she *wants* his company' (136-7). In the scene, Aslam purposefully reverses the symbolic meaning of the scarf and violates Shamas' perceptions of liberation. Exposing the fault of an oversimplified cosmopolitan vision, the novel criticises the veil-as-oppression discourse and the liberation fantasy: just as wearing scarves does not necessarily signify Islamic backwardness, so letting go of them does not necessarily suggest a desire for emancipation.

Maps for Lost Lovers shows that Shamas fails to alleviate Suraya's agony simply through literary discussions and artistic enlightenment. In the novel, the paisley pattern on Suraya's jacket reminds Shamas of the love story between Goddess Parvati and God Shiva in literature: he remembers that in mystical stories, it is the paisley pattern imprinted on the lot flowers – 'arising from the spilt semen of mating animals and birds' – that eventually leads the God Shiva to find Goddess Parvati after their departure (165). The story about the paisley pattern becomes an inspiration for Shamas to pursue unbridled love. However, in the meantime, he fears that the paisley pattern will be a target for unknown, censorious men who he fears will target them – he ponders, 'would they aim at one of the paisleys' (163). Shamas' hesitation reveals a weakness at the heart of his championing of an aesthetic understanding of Islam in its relative inability to address concrete socio-political problems. In the novel,

although Suraya's literary discussions with Shamas temporarily motivate her to challenge restrictive Islamic norms, most of the time she is preoccupied with the thoughts of her son and husband in Pakistan, and literature and art are too weak to reduce her pain and suffering. In the bookstore, Suraya tends to be absentminded, 'half-looking, half-pretending-to-look at the books of poetry' (201). While Shamas is excited about his ideas, she does not wish to 'alienate or contradict him' because she has 'kept only the thought of reuniting with her son in mind' (201). Shamas' sexual intercourse with Suraya after Nusrat's Sufi concert increases, rather than alleviates, Suraya's suffering. The concert prompts Shamas to rethink life and death; when the concert is over, Shamas goes to the bookstore to find Suraya, and they have sex. Unlike Shamas, who innocently believes in the transcendental power of love, Suraya is aware that reality is more complex than they imagine. When they are having sex, she observes that 'from the wallpaper, the pairs of the deer in their red flame-of-the-forest bowers turned their necks to look at them' (198). When later on she takes a bath in the lake, Suraya also imagines that 'the moon's age-old eye watches her from above' (200). The 'pairs of the deer' and 'the moon's age-old eye' that keep watching Suraya symbolise how she is constrained by powerful outside forces, which prevent her from choosing freely. Shamas' romantic perceptions of love and freedom cannot rid Suraya of her feelings of guilt and shame for losing her chastity, and she feels even more intense grief afterwards.

Although Shamas seeks to find cosmopolitan ideas within Islamic art and literature, as a Community Relations Council director he tends to rely too much on the British legal system when he needs to put those ideas into practice, and this prevents him from gaining trust from the Muslim community. In the novel, when Shamas eventually knows Suraya's plan, he refuses to consider Suraya's proposal and to follow the Islamic convention of finding a temporary marriage, which he believes to be oppressive. However, Shamas cannot find a workable solution either: he falls back on the British legal system, offering to help Suraya by beginning 'custody proceedings' for her son and promising that 'he'll do all he can, write to MPs, find the

best lawyers' (228, 240). Contesting his approach, Suraya reminds him that he has 'forgotten what Pakistan is like' (228). Suraya declines Shamas' suggestion because she is aware that if they follow the judicial procedure 'the case could go on for years', and if she loses the case, 'they'd never let [her] see [her son] again out of vindictiveness' (228). Suraya's rejection of Shamas' proposal suggests that despite institutional guarantees of legal protection and fair treatment, cultural conditions and custom in practice override those protections, especially in a transnational context; the resulting dilemma is a constituent problem for cosmopolitan claims built on an experience of British life that downplay, are ignorant of, or have forgotten social contexts elsewhere in the world.

Indeed, the novel goes as far as identifying that this legal-cultural divide exists even in Britain. Representing the confrontations between Shamas and conservative and even radical Muslims, the novel demonstrates that liberal Muslims are not powerful enough to cope with the challenges and threats of others by merely resorting to the British legal and political system. In the story, Shamas once caught a cleric raping a boy, and he called the British police to report the assault. However, he did not win support from the Muslim community because the majority of them were worried that 'the scandal would give Islam and Pakistan a bad name' (235). Instead of acknowledging the crime of the cleric, Kaukab, on the contrary, blamed Shamas and said ironically and bitterly, 'you can't believe your luck that you have a chance to defame and ridicule Islam at last' (240). It turns out that Shamas' effort to help other residents by playing a part in the Community Relations Council arouses resentment from the conservative Muslims. On his way to see Suraya, Shamas is waylaid by a group of Muslim people, who ask him 'why are you trying to blacken our name, asking awkward questions through your office?' (253). Shamas' argument with these people eventually escalates into a fight, and Shamas barely has any strength to defend himself against their attack. During the conflict, the newspapers that Shamas has been holding '[fell] from his grip' – torn or whole, they 'scatter all around him', 'rustling around in the descending silence' (253-4). The torn and scattered newspapers

symbolise the powerlessness of the western discourses and systems that Shamas relied on (and even excessively relied on) at the time. By showing his weakness during the fight, the novel seems to gesture towards the limits of cosmopolitanism in the context of cultural encounter.

Section Five: Young Muslims, Westernised Islam, and the Cosmopolitan Future

While Shamas, as a first-generation liberal Muslim, tends to rely too heavily on the social models provided by British liberalism, the novel explores how young Muslims may develop a better combination of Islam and the western context and pave the way for a cosmopolitan future. As Garbi Schmidt notes, although young British Muslims appear to be thoroughly westernised, they are committed to maintaining cultural distinctiveness and preserving unique religious identities; ‘the proof of a profound knowledge of Islam is described as crucial’ when they discuss Islam in a western context.⁵³ In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, although Ujala is the child in the family who is most critical of Islam, his criticism is still based on his knowledge and research on Islam. Ujala has read the Quran, but what differentiates him from his parents is that he reads the Quran in English. During the family reunion, Ujala accuses his mother of blindly supporting Islamic orthodoxy: he lists such details as the fact that Muslim females’ ‘testimony in a court of law is worth half that of a man’, and he criticises the saying of Muhammad that ‘two religions cannot exist in Arabia’ (321). The details that Ujala has listed demonstrate that his criticism is based on his careful study of Islamic religion and culture. The trend of globalisation leads to a new way to access the Quran, and that is to read it in English rather than in Arabic. When Kaukab asks Ujala how he has suddenly acquired so much knowledge about Muslims, Ujala replies that ‘I’ve read the Quran, in English, unlike you who just chant it in Arabic without

⁵³ Garbi Schmidt, ‘Islamic Identity Formation among Young Muslims: The Case of Denmark, Sweden and the United States’, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 24.1 (2004), 31-45 (p. 36).

knowing what the words mean' (322). Mastery of English enables Ujala to read translated versions of the Quran and equips him with cross-cultural perspectives, and this makes it easier for him to generate an autonomous and modernised interpretation of Islam.

The daughter Mah-Jabin also exemplifies how the young Muslims manage to adapt Islam into the western context in daily life: instead of assimilating into the western culture, Mah-Jabin assumes a hybrid identity by dressing herself in a style that is neither wholly Islamic nor western. As Dwyer observes, 'dress has become an overdetermined signifier for the identity of young British Muslim women'; yet by 'resisting the meanings attached to different forms of dress and by creating new styles', the young Muslim women can 'open up possibilities for challenging binary oppositions and creating alternative "hybrid" identities'.⁵⁴ In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Kaukab does not allow her daughter to wear 'western clothes' unless they 'mirrored *shalwar-kameez* in cut and style' (93). Nonetheless, the idea of 'mirroring' *shalwar-kameez* is interesting: it leaves room for parody and subversion, which suggests that the clothing of young Muslims is neither western nor Islamic. The way Mah-Jabin dresses illustrates a combination of the western and Islamic styles: she wears 'chalked green suede trainers at one end and an uncovered head at the other, black trousers gently fluted at the ankles, and a dazzling purple-collared shirt made out of a marigold sari fabric' (93). Mah-Jabin's blending of Islamic and western styles of dress serves to blur the boundary between the two. In the novel, she constantly challenges the Islamic dress code, sneaking in 'secret codes and signals' that are consistent with her re-evaluation and appropriation of that code (93). For example, Mah-Jabin purposefully displays her admiration for female sexuality by 'calling attention to the chest' when she buys 'a blue sweater that had a broad paler stripe running from armpit to armpit' (93). Importantly, Mah-Jabin still respects the Islamic way of dressing, but she starts to cherish a globalised Islamic identity by incorporating subversive ideas into the traditional clothes. The silk Mah-Jabin buys for her mother Kaukab to sew a *kameez*

⁵⁴ Dwyer, 'Negotiating Diasporic Identities: Young British South Asian Muslim Women', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 23.4 (2000), 475 - 486 (p. 481).

for herself is ‘patterned with butterflies’, and this demonstrates her challenge to orthodox Islam because, as Kaukab complains, ‘Islam forbids pictures of living things’ (92). The wearing of a different style of traditional clothes is both a continuation of and a deviation from South Asian culture: unlike traditional Islamic items of clothing such as the *kameez*, veil, and scarf, those with ‘butterfly patterns’ bought by Mah-Jabin indicate a subversive appropriation of Islamic conventions by placing greater value on sensual enjoyment and pleasure.

A more promising cosmopolitan prospect is shown in the case of Charag, a young artist and the oldest son of the family. Access to cultural others in the context of glocal cohabitation facilitates young Muslims’ rebellious behaviour. In the novel, Charag is torn between his artistic ambitions and his mother’s traditional view of success. He is gifted at art, yet his mother sees being an artist as a despicable pursuit and urges him to study science instead to become a doctor. However, Charag’s conversation with Stella – his white girlfriend from outside the community – inspires him to ‘abandon his Chemistry degree immediately’ and to follow his dream instead; his art teacher also encourages him to continue his subject and even secures him a place to exhibit his paintings in the art gallery in the town centre (123-28). Charag repudiates an aesthetics of repetition and repetitive and mimetic geometric patterns that he sees as typical in traditional Islamic art; instead, he seeks creative depictions of people in real life, and he is determined to infuse his art with greater sociopolitical significance. In Kaukab’s mind, art is a trivial matter and it is used simply for decorative purposes: Charag’s artistic talent is valued only when she needs him to sketch the vignette on a ‘bar of perfumed soap’ so that she could ‘embroider it in rows on her own or Mah-Jabin’s *kameezes*’ (123). However, Charag endows his art with greater significance: he infuses his paintings with humanist sensibility by drawing people’s concerns and griefs in real life. At the lakeside, Charag is not satisfied with his idyllic and pastoral paintings of nature, and he is aware that ‘his art has become uninspired of late, needing a new direction’ (130). His search for a ‘new direction’ in art is associated with his attempts to help Suraya out of her dilemma. Suraya believes that she has to abide by the Islamic law and find a temporary marriage, but Charag disagrees with her,

and he reflects that '[t]he culture she shares with him is based on segregation and the denial and contempt of the human body' (132-33). Charag's departure from the traditional Islamic culture is demonstrated by his aesthetic imagining of Suraya, who, in his mind, resembles the young gipsies in the first version of Caravaggio's *The Fortune Teller* (132). Charag's assertion that contempt for the human body is a failing of conservative Islam makes explicit the inspiration and rationale behind his later artwork, where the human body is foregrounded in direct defiance of Islamic aniconism. No longer simply depicting lifeless items following traditional Islamic aesthetics, Charag realises that his greater responsibility as an artist is to paint 'the humiliation [that Suraya has] just suffered, the despondent clumsiness to which her circumstances have reduced her, and the longing she must feel for her son and husband' (132).

Charag's innovations in art represent something new; however, they are not incommensurate with Islam but rather symbolise a brave appropriation of Islamic aesthetics projected into the new context of multiculturalism and globalisation. Charag's painting *Uncut self-portrait* features rich traditional Islamic imagery such as 'small immaculate butterflies, fruit- and flower-heavy boughs, birds, hoopoes and parakeets'; meanwhile, he also foregrounds a disturbing naked image of himself with 'an uncircumcised penis' inspired by his life in Britain (320). The 'Uncut' self-portrait symbolises the birth of modern Islamic identity, one that borrows from 'rich traditional imagery' but also represents human flesh and nakedness, and which expresses a denunciation of certain Islamic practices such as circumcision. Charag's painting appropriates a prevailing aesthetic of 'Edenic' art (pre-lapsarian or 'before the fall'), which implies that circumcision is a kind of fall from Eden. Charag may seem to be westernised, but he is still 'in touch' with his Pakistani roots. Importantly, his hybridised form of art is circulated on the global market and thus has a wide influence: his painting is part of the Gaffney Gallery's second Young British Artists exhibition, which opens in London (320). The fact that Charag's art is exhibited together with other 'Young British artists' – rather than 'Young British Muslim artists' – indicates the eroded boundaries between native British people and Muslim

immigrants, and the fact that the exhibition is held in 'London', the metropolis, suggests that their work has international influences, which is to be appreciated by people across the world.

Charag's shift of attention to humanity enables him to reach out to people on a large scale rather than just focusing on the griefs and sorrows of his intimates, and this endows his artistic expression with a cosmopolitan significance. In the novel, Charag saves from a photographer in town all the photographs and negatives of Pakistani and Indian immigrants from the 50s, 60s, and the early 70s, and he attempts to incorporate their lives into his art – 'examining and exploring them', thereby infusing his art with social and political significance (318). Importantly, Charag's expanded concern for other people does not overshadow or displace his concern for those close to him, nor does it echo Kaukab's complaints about Shamas who appears to be 'more interested in the fate of *other* photographs than the ones of [his] own family' (329). On the contrary, Charag's resolution to depict other immigrants' lives provides him with the chance to rescue a photo of his own family, and this symbolises a unified concern for personal matters and public ones rather than the separation between the two. The photo of Charag's family opens out onto a larger picture of immigration history. Even though Shamas hopes that the town can buy the photos, which implies that the photos will become the property of the state and 'museumised', he later acknowledges that 'as long as the people in them are celebrated somehow and are not allowed to be forgotten, it doesn't matter who has them' (319). This illustrates the possibility of giving more people access to immigrant history; whereas the photographer in the town goes out of business, Charag, as an artist, acquires the power to keep their pasts alive and plant the seed for a cosmopolitan future.

Conclusion

Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* demonstrates how the Muslims in a Pakistani diaspora develop complex relationships with their Islamic religion and culture to

adapt to the new life in the context of the migration to Britain. By representing the Muslims' dynamic relationships with Islam, the novel foregrounds both the challenges to and possibilities for cosmopolitanism. I contend that the novel illuminates the hopes for cosmopolitanism in at least two ways. Firstly, it encourages us to see the rich cosmopolitan content embedded in Islam (as exemplified, for instance, in Kaukab's interpretation of the Quran and Shamas' Sufi ideas), which exposes the falsehood of the discourse of the 'clash of civilisations' that has prevailed since 9/11. The novel conveys a clear message that Islamic religion and culture are manifold and can never be seen as fundamentally insulated or essentially incompatible with others, and this forms the premise of cosmopolitanism. Secondly, the novel suggests that diasporic Muslims are especially likely to contribute to cosmopolitan Islam. While in their home countries Muslims may not need to link Islam with a global consciousness, in the novel diasporic Muslims consciously invoke the implicitly cosmopolitan messages that are embedded in Islam to adapt to the new context of globalisation. The novel shows that almost all the Muslims in the diaspora practice a 'hybrid Islam' that combines South Asian and British elements, though the levels of hybridity vary. The most devout Muslim Kaukab has thrown the Pakistani dates in the English garden; Shamas resorts to the British legal system to solve Muslims' problems; and young Muslims such as Charag, Mah-Jabin, and Ujala are even better at combining Islam with the new western context (as is seen in Charag's painting, Mah-Jabin's clothing, and Ujala's reading of the English version of the Quran).

However, *Maps for Lost Lovers* also foregrounds the multiple challenges to cosmopolitan Islam. For orthodox Muslims such as Kaukab, one main obstacle is that they suffer more than others from isolation, prejudice, and the stereotypical impression that they are 'terrorists', and this is especially the case in an atmosphere of Islamophobia after 9/11. The novel also demonstrates the tension between agency and freedom, autonomy and social constraint in the case of Kaukab: for example, living alone in the domestic space and having little knowledge of English makes it hard for Kaukab to connect to a wider world. For liberal Muslims such as Shamas, the overly-romanticised view of liberation and cosmopolitanism is an obstacle for them to see

and solve the concrete problems that the diasporic Muslims confront. An even more severe problem appears to be their tendency to excessively rely on western liberalism: it indicates the danger of Muslims being assimilated by the West rather than developing a new intersubjective and cosmopolitan relationship with it. In the novel, the most positive cosmopolitanism outlook is shown by the young Muslims, who appear to best adapt Islam to the westernised and globalised context.

This chapter on *Maps for Lost Lovers*, like the preceding one on Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*, has shown the complexity of cosmopolitanism in the context of glocalisation. In the next chapter, on Hari Kunzru's *Transmission*, I seek to extend my focus by showing that glocalisation goes beyond the form of 'physically' living together. The establishment of virtual connections has been made possible by the age of informatisation: the resulting new forms of social relations make it necessary to examine the relationship between information society and 'digital cosmopolitanism'.

The Instability of Information Capitalist Society and Digital Cosmopolitanism in Hari Kunzru's *Transmission*

Introduction

As Frederick Aldama notes, Hari Kunzru is an author who 'gives a pulse to colonial, postcolonial and multicultural Generation X experiences and shape-shifting identities'.¹ Kunzru's first novel *The Impressionist* (2002), which established him as a major British novelist, offers a critique of colonialism and its legacies in its dramatisation of a crumbling British Empire. Centring on the 'half-baked' Anglo-Indian character Pran Nath, the novel adopts an impressionistic style; it parodies colonial discourses, showing how selfhood is fragmented and constituted performatively in the global context and how hybridity forms a fundamental condition. Kunzru's concerns about postcolonial and multicultural experiences and his impressionistic style remain consistent in his following novel *Transmission* (2004). Nonetheless, centring on the experience of an IT worker Arjun Mehta who migrates to the United States, *Transmission* seeks to explore an even more complex reality in an age of informatisation, where the mastery and exchange of information become an essential force in social and economic activities. As Peter Childs and James Green correctly point out, *Transmission* articulates 'contemporary concerns about what lies beneath the glossy surface of the information economy and the rhetoric of the borderless world'.² In their critique of *Transmission*, Childs and Green hold a grim view of the coming age of informatisation: they note that, for example, some character is 'at once emotionally disconnected and wishing to isolate himself' and that social interactions become 'reduced to the transmission of packets of information'.³

¹ Aldama, Fredrick, 'Hari Kunzru in Conversation', 20:45 (2005), 11-14 (p.11).

² Peter Childs and James Green, *Aesthetics and Ethics in Twenty-First Century British Novels: Zadie Smith, Nadeem Aslam, Hari Kunzru and David Mitchell*, (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 84.

³ Childs and Green, p. 85-86.

However, unlike Childs and Green who mainly focus on the downside of the information society, I explore how *Transmission* shows both the challenges and possibilities in the coming new age and seek to investigate the prospect of digital cosmopolitanism.

As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri note in *Empire*, we have now entered an age of ‘post-modernization’, or ‘informatization’, which is characterised by ‘the central role played by knowledge, information, affect, and communication’ in social and economic activities.⁴ As the mastery and exchange of information become the main source of productivity, production is no longer tied to physical regions but rather increasingly dependent on the globally established information network, and distant collaboration has become more convenient and frequent due to the advancement of telecommunications and the internet. The age of informatisation means that no country or region can easily separate itself off from the global network, and the growing need for international connection and interdependence potentially paves the way for a cosmopolitan future. However, as Frank Webster observes, the information age does not herald the birth of a completely new type of society, since it is consistent with the trajectory of capitalist development, signalling ‘the unhindered expansion of capitalism across the globe and deeper into the private realm’.⁵ The new information society, which is more accurately seen as an ‘information capitalist society’, still features diverse forms of inequality and oppression. At an early point in the informatisation of the world, Langdon Winner warned of the uneven distribution of power in an information capitalist society, presciently asking ‘who stands to gain and who to lose in the new order of things? How will power be distributed in a thoroughly digitized society?’⁶ Subsequently, that ‘thoroughly digitized society’ has not delivered on its considerable promise; Robert McChesney underlines the gap between visions of

⁴ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, (London: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 285.

⁵ Frank Webster, ‘Information, Capitalism, and Uncertainty’, *Information, Communication & Society*, 3.1 (2000), 69-90 (p. 78).

⁶ Langdon Winner, ‘Technology Today: Utopia or Dystopia?’, *Social Research*, (1997), 989-1017 (p. 1006).

cosmopolitanism and reality using the internet as an example, stating that ‘the tremendous promise of the digital revolution has been compromised by capitalist appropriation and development of the Internet’.⁷ However, the appropriation of digital promise by capitalist interests has not been total. Instrumental devices, systems, and techniques are always subject to complicated ‘social shaping’ or ‘social construction’.⁸ To some extent, the popularity of new media and technology and their extensive use conflict with capitalist powers, and there is an ongoing conflict between the cosmopolitan potential of internet technology and its capitalist priorities.

Focusing on the experiences of an Indian IT worker named Arjun Mehta, who migrates to the United States, Hari Kunzru’s *Transmission* captures the dynamics in the contemporary ‘information capitalist society’ where knowledge and information become essential for social and economic activities, and the novel provides a platform to explore the new challenges to, and opportunities for, cosmopolitanism in an age of informatisation. The novel opens with Arjun Mehta leaving his home country of India and heading to the United States for better job opportunities in the IT industry. However, Arjun’s life is reduced to stagnation and immobility once he arrives there. Even after he finds a job working for the anti-virus company Virugenix, he remains marginalised and in a precarious position; he is the first person to be fired when the company encounters difficulties. Arjun’s experience in the United States foregrounds the precarious condition of digital immigrants in an information capitalist society, which challenges an over-optimistic view of cosmopolitanism. In contrast to Arjun, Guy Swift, an English global business brand manager, enjoys the convenience brought by technological advancement; he seeks to exploit the value of information to maintain his privileged status, which is demonstrated by the way he operates his company *Tomorrow**. The contrast between the situations of Arjun and Guy manifests the mounting divide between digital labourers, who continue to be exploited, and the privileged ‘vectoralist class’, to use McKenzie Wark’s term, who ‘control the vectors

⁷ Robert McChesney, *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism is Turning the Internet against Democracy*, (New York: The New Press, 2013), p. 97.

⁸ Winner, ‘Technology Today: Utopia or Dystopia?’, p. 997.

along which information circulates' and own the means of realising the value of information.⁹ This seemingly rigid social hierarchy is undermined by the outbreak of the computer virus 'Leela', which is created and released by Arjun in revenge for his unfair dismissal by Virugenix. As Jussi Parikka rightly points out, 'Diseases *expose*' and computer viruses cannot simply be seen as a 'technological accident' because they 'reveal a whole thematic of accidents and risks embedded in issues of globalization, digitalization, médiatisation, and risk society'.¹⁰ In *Transmission*, the Leela virus exposes the digital immigrants' repressed anger at their maltreatment and exploitation; it also exposes the limitations of the 'vectoralist class', which is rendered powerless by the computer virus outbreak. Representing the days of chaos and confusion during the virus outbreak, the novel encourages us to re-examine hidden problems in the information capitalist society, and it sheds light on digital cosmopolitanism by foregrounding the innate instability of the hierarchical power structure.

I contend that *Transmission* both underlines the substantial divide between digital immigrants and the privileged vectoralist class and demonstrates the prospect of digital cosmopolitanism by foregrounding the instability of the information capitalist society. The novel shows that a seemingly stable social hierarchy is under threat both implicitly and explicitly. Focusing on Arjun's experiences when he first arrives in the United States, the first section in this chapter examines digital immigrants' precarious condition in the information capitalist society, and it also investigates how they add human warmth to the highly mechanised culture and contribute to everyday cosmopolitanism in the workplace. Section Two illustrates a relatively bleak cosmopolitan prospect: it examines the privatisation of information by focusing on Guy Swift, who exploits the value of information and seeks to build a digital empire exclusive to the privileged few. Section Three, in contrast, explores the positive signs

⁹ McKenzie Wark, 'Information Wants to be Free (but is Everywhere in Chains)', *Cultural Studies*, 20.2-3 (2006), 165-183 (p. 172).

¹⁰ Jussi Parikka, *Digital Contagions: A Media Archaeology of Computer Viruses*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 5.

of cosmopolitanism by examining the creation of the Leela virus and the uniqueness of 'cyberspace rebellion', which is hard to suppress and quickly connects people across the world. Section Four investigates the variants of the Leela virus which are beyond Arjun's control and demonstrates how a worldwide digital disaster triggers reflections on 'forced cosmopolitanism'. The digital disaster exposes the inefficiency of the nation-states and highlights the importance of international cooperation. The fact that people collectively witness and experience the global upheaval in an age of informatisation prompts the establishment of global cross-border connections.

Literature Review: The Information Capitalist Society and Uncertainty

What is the idea of an information society which seems to underpin *Transmission*? Manuel Castells suggests that the coming information age announces a new information society, or what he calls 'network society', where 'the action of knowledge upon knowledge itself [becomes] the main source of productivity' and the social structure is comprised of information networks provided by information technologies.¹¹ The information society has two defining features, which are highlighted by Castells. Firstly, it is 'global' because 'core activities of production, consumption, and circulation are organised on a global scale'; secondly, it is 'networked' because, under the new historical conditions, 'productivity is generated through and competition is played out in a global network of interaction between business networks'.¹² As Webster reminds us, the information society is not an entirely new type of society; rather, it is consistent with the trajectory of capitalist development, and thus it is best examined in the context of capitalism. Noting the new features of global information capitalism, Christian Fuchs further underlines the consistency between an information society and a capitalist society. As Fuchs shows, in global information capitalism, information becomes an important force for the

¹¹ Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 17.

¹² Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, p. 77.

accumulation of capital: organisations and social networks are increasingly globally distributed, and the flows of capital, power, money, commodities, people, and information are processed globally at high speed.¹³ The close connection between information society and capitalism is the main reason why I am focusing on the ‘information capitalist society’ in this chapter, and it is the ‘global’ and ‘networked’ character of that society that offers the prospect of a new cosmopolitanism on a global scale.

In an information capitalist society, however, there remain diverse forms of exploitation and inequality. This can be shown by the substantial divide between Hardt and Negri’s ‘immaterial labourers’ and Wark’s ‘vectoralist class’. The information age gives rise to immaterial labourers, who, as Hardt and Negri note, create ‘immaterial products, such as knowledge, information, communication, a relationship, or an emotional response’.¹⁴ Yet, many immaterial labourers live under precarious conditions. As Ulrich Beck observes, in contemporary society, ‘capital is global, while work is local’.¹⁵ In an age of informatisation, mass production is no longer bound to one specific territory but rather relies on the global network; this means capital can easily withdraw from one site to another, and labourers are placed in a weakened bargaining position and may easily lose their jobs.¹⁶ In *Transmission*, Arjun, as an Indian IT worker, represents the immaterial labourers: he is compelled to work hard to survive and is the first person to be fired when the company encounters a financial crisis. His counterpoint is Guy Swift, a member of the dominant ‘vectoralist’ class at the apex of information capitalist society, whose success lies in the exploitation of the subordinate workers. Wark states that the vectoralist class does not produce anything new, but gains power by ‘monopolizing intellectual property – patents, copyrights and trademarks – and the means of reproducing their value – the

¹³ Christian Fuchs, *Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age*, (New York; Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 111.

¹⁴ Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 108.

¹⁵ Ulrich Beck, *World Risk Society*, (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), p. 11.

¹⁶ Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 296.

vectors of communication'.¹⁷ In the novel, Swift owns the means of realising the value of information, which has now become an abstract property. Under the control of the vectoralist class, the privatisation of information becomes the dominant aspect of commodified life, which leads to continued inequality and exploitation.

Despite the substantial divisions between the two groups of people, however, the seemingly rigid social hierarchy is unstable because of the particular skills of immaterial labourers and their subversive use of information, which together offer a route to cosmopolitanism that thwarts the capitalist instrumentalisation of the information society. As Webster notes, immaterial labourers are different from conventional labourers because they are highly educated and therefore capable of 'self-programming'.¹⁸ Equipped with knowledge, immaterial labourers can better cope with uncertainty and adapt to new environments. They have 'learned how to learn', and that 'allows for the maximum flexibility that is the requisite of survival in the volatile information age'.¹⁹ Importantly, in *Transmission* Arjun's mastery of advanced knowledge empowers him: he creates the computer virus 'Leela' when he is subjected to unfair treatment in the company. The fact that immaterial labourers are both knowledgeable and creative grants them subversive power, which plants seeds of uncertainty in the information capitalist society. In an age of informatisation, one particular labourer's influence tends to get amplified by the increasing need for cross-border cooperation and the pervasiveness of the information network. As Hardt and Negri observe, '[t]oday productivity, wealth, and the creation of social surpluses take the form of cooperative interactivity through linguistic, communicational, and affective networks'.²⁰ In an information society, cross-border connections are more easily established than ever before. Frequent cross-border communication and international cooperation help immaterial workers to exert influence on a global scale, which creates favourable conditions for cosmopolitanism.

¹⁷ Wark, 'Information Wants to be Free', p. 172.

¹⁸ Webster, 'Information', p. 78.

¹⁹ Webster, 'Information', p. 78.

²⁰ Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 294.

William Freudenburg states that in an age of informatisation, ‘our increases in technical control have come about, in part, at the cost of decreases in social control’.²¹ To some extent, social control in an information capitalist society is weakened because information cannot easily be possessed and subversive forces cannot easily be located. The difficulty in maintaining social control is partly caused by what Freudenburg terms ‘the ontological properties of information itself’, since information ‘escapes the bounds of any particular materiality’.²² Although those from privileged backgrounds seek to take control of information and make it their private property, in Wark’s figurative terms ‘information wants to be free’ and thus it is very difficult for certain groups of people to contain it safely and permanently. Moreover, once social order is disrupted, its restoration entails huge challenges due to the pervasiveness of power in a networked information society: power tends to be dispersed on a global scale as individuals manage to exert influence through widely established communicational and affective networks. As Hardt and Negri note, in an age of informatisation, ‘resistances are no longer marginal but active in the centre of a society that opens up in networks; the individual points are singularized in a thousand plateaus’.²³ As it is hard to find the source of subversive forces, it becomes more difficult to maintain social order and to re-establish the hierarchical social system once it is disrupted.

The internet plays an important role in expanding sociability, and rebellions in cyberspace pose great challenges to the information capitalist society. This in turn opens up a space where cosmopolitanism might take root. As Castells points out, the internet heralds the emergence of ‘virtual communities’, and it contributes to ‘expanding sociability beyond the socially defined boundaries of self-recognition’.²⁴

²¹ William Freudenburg, ‘The “Risk Society” Reconsidered: Recreancy, the Division of Labor, and Risks to the Social Fabric’, in *Risk in the Modern Age: Social Theory, Science and Environmental Decision-Making*, ed. by Cohen, Maurie J. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp. 107-120 (p. 114).

²² Wark, ‘Information Wants to be Free’, p. 174-6.

²³ Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 25.

²⁴ Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, p. 388.

With the popularity of the internet, people are brought together online around shared values and interests, and ties of support and friendship are created that could also extend into face-to-face interactions.²⁵ In particular, Ananda Mitra notes how marginal voices are widely heard in cyberspace. As Mitra states, in cyberspace, the utterance of a particular individual is ‘often available to a global audience’.²⁶ The call of the other is accessible to a large number of subordinated people; consequently, ‘other dispossessed would respond to it and add to the call eventually presenting the dominant with a crisis’.²⁷ *Transmission* foregrounds the special role played by the internet and underlines how Arjun, who is marginalised both as a digital labourer and a hacker, is empowered and makes his voice widely heard through the internet. In the novel, Arjun’s power is spread and amplified by the Leela virus, and his appeal resonates with many other people who previously had no connection with him.

Rosi Braidotti observes that advanced capitalism engenders ‘a perverse form of the posthuman’: while in the past, humankind was believed to be the ‘measure of all things’, now humans may not completely control the new technologies developed by them.²⁸ In *Transmission*, the Leela virus soon gets out of Arjun’s control, and it triggers a global disaster that radically shakes the established world order. The fact that people cannot control machines, whose powers remain mysterious, makes the discussion of what Beck terms ‘world risk society’ more urgent than before, and the unpredictable and even uncontrollable global risks trigger events to which the human response is to organise on a global scale. As Beck argues, ‘the risk regime is a function of a new order: it is not national, but global’.²⁹ The outbreak of global risks challenges the concept of ‘national time’, which, especially with the popularity of new media, is fragmented and no longer contained in the sphere of the nation as ‘society

²⁵ Castells, *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 119.

²⁶ Ananda Mitra, ‘Marginal Voices in Cyberspace’, *New Media & Society*, 3.1 (2001), 29-48 (p. 32).

²⁷ Mitra, ‘Marginal Voices in Cyberspace’, p. 32.

²⁸ Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), p. 7.

²⁹ Beck, *World Risk Society*, p. 3.

must respond to all these challenges *simultaneously*'.³⁰ Consequently, the experience of global risks is an occurrence of abrupt and fully conscious confrontation with the normally excluded other, who has also witnessed and participated in the event. In this light, as Beck points out, 'global risks tear down national boundaries and jumble together the native with the foreign'.³¹ The fact that national boundaries are eroded by the outbreak of global risks paves the way for a cosmopolitan future. Beck further notes the rise of 'subpolitics', as global threats cause individuals from all backgrounds to act. Beck defines 'subpolitics' as the 'shaping of society from below': it refers to 'politics outside and beyond the representative institutions of the political system of nation-states'.³² The rise of subpolitics creates a favourable condition for cosmopolitanism as individuals are collectively called to action in times of global risks. For example, *Transmission* depicts a mysterious character named Nic (who was also once a hacker) who shows up during the computer virus outbreak and assists Arjun in his escape from the police. Nic represents those individuals who play a significant role in relation to global risks: in times of social turbulence, these individuals embark on reshaping society from below and they may bypass the institutions of representative opinion-formation within national boundaries.

Section One: The Precarious Condition of Digital Laborers and Everyday Cosmopolitanism in the Workplace

The coming of the information age offers digital labourers a chance to leave their home country and enter a larger world. *Transmission* opens with Arjun Mehta going for an interview at the IT consultant agency 'Databodies', which can help him find a job in the IT industry in the United States. Databodies is a representation of the consultant agencies in India that serve the practice of 'body shopping': these agencies,

³⁰ Beck, *World Risk Society*, p. 2.

³¹ Beck, 'Living in the World Risk Society: A Hobhouse Memorial Public Lecture given on Wednesday 15 February 2006 at the London School of Economics', *Economy and Society* 35.3 (2006) 329-345, (p. 331).

³² Beck, *World Risk Society*, p. 39.

as Aneesh Aneesh defines them, shop for skilled bodies – i.e. they recruit young Indian software professionals, contracting them out for short-term projects in the United States.³³ In the novel, the office of Databodies is located in Palika Bazaar, which is a busy and populated place that exemplifies people's fast-paced life in the information age. In Palika Bazaar, 'office workers, foreign backpackers, messengers and lunching ladies' all 'elbow past the beggars, dodging traffic and running in and out of [the building] like contestants in a demented game.'³⁴ Standing outside the building, Arjun is both excited about the prospect of entering a larger world and intimidated by its strangeness and uncertainty. He seems to be 'the only stationary figure in the crowd', 'feeling himself as small as he would ever get' (6). Notably, Arjun is only one of many young Indian IT workers dreaming of migrating to the United States. Waiting for the job interview inside the building, Arjun finds himself in 'a waiting room filled with nervous young people', and he strives to calm himself down by remembering '*how many positions Databodies has open*' (7). A sense of global connectivity is conveyed by the clocks hanging above the receptionist's desk. The clocks not only display 'the time in key world cities' but offer a heavily compressed version of time – 'New Delhi seemed to be only two hours ahead of New York, and one behind Tokyo' (6). The compression of time is linked with the compression of space, and it gives rise to a feeling of cosmopolitanism: automatically, Arjun finds himself 'calculating the shrinkage in the world' and ruminating on the image of 'the globe contracting like a deflating beach ball' (6).

Although Databodies gives young Indian IT workers the hope of making high wages and leading good lives abroad, the novel shows that the promises it makes can be both hollow and deceptive. After a long wait outside the office, Arjun is eventually allowed to meet Sunny Srinivasan, the IT consultant at Databodies, for the job interview. From Arjun's perspective, Sunny Srinivasan is 'less a human being than a

³³ Aneesh Aneesh, *Virtual Migration: The Programming of Globalization*, (London: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 39.

³⁴ Hari Kunzru, *Transmission*, (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 6. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

communications medium, a channel for the transmission of consumer lifestyle messages' (8). Those messages are conveyed, for instance, through the 'branding on [Sunny's] tennis shirt', 'his belt buckle', 'the side arms of the UV sun goggles', and 'the heft of his Swiss watch' – all of these things immediately catch Arjun's eye when he enters the office (8). During the interview, Sunny, as a semi-Americanised figure, is the spokesman for the affluent and luxurious life that digital workers like Arjun expect to lead once they find positions in America. Sunny repeatedly mentions how the mission of Databodies is to help others fulfil their 'dreams'. Sunny promises that once Arjun has migrated to America, he will become what he has 'always dreamed of becoming'; the mission of *Databodies* is, accordingly, to 'help people become their dreams' (10). However, the repeatedly used word 'dream' implies that the bright future predicted by Sunny is merely an illusion. As Arjun successfully passes the interview, he excitedly exclaims, 'Amrika! Becoming his dreams!': like the ambiguous word 'dream', the fact that Arjun pronounces 'America' 'Amrika' alludes to the distorted impression of America that he obtains from the interview at Databodies (11). As it turns out, once he arrives in America, Arjun is thrown into a long 'bench period' when no job is offered to him. Arjun realises that 'The job Databodies had guaranteed him was not in fact guaranteed at all' (40). The staff at Databodies ignore Arjun's protest when he tries to remind them of 'the \$50,000 a year his contract guaranteed' (40). They simply tell Arjun that he could always go back to India, but if so, he would owe them 'for the visa and ticket' as well as a ten-thousand-dollar 'administrative fee for the inconvenience', which Arjun cannot afford (40). Despite the promises made to them upon signing their contracts, their rights and welfare are not guaranteed. With the assistance of such agencies as Databodies, skilful digital workers are incorporated into the global information supply chain that has been established with the prosperity of the IT industry, yet this chain does not establish meaningful social connections: these workers are simply tools for making profits.

In America, which was once his dreamland, Arjun's world shrinks rather than expands. During his long wait for a job, Arjun leads a life of stagnation and immobility; situated at the margin of society, he has few opportunities to explore his

surroundings or to build connections with the local people. The first time that Arjun's experiences in America are narrated, Kunzru refers to him as 'a figure', 'a walking man,' and 'the person', as Arjun walks alone along the margin of the wide California highway (38). By portraying Arjun as a nameless figure, Kunzru illustrates how digital immigrants in American society are regarded as inconspicuous and are literally anonymous, even though they share the same urban space with the native citizens. As Biao Xiang notes, Indian IT workers who come to the United States through the practice of 'body shopping' have no idea when they will be offered a job, nor are they paid or given a nominal stipend between job placements.³⁵ Arjun, who has no money to buy a car or to take driving lessons, spends a whole year repeating the same walk (or at least similar walks): 'To the store, wherever the store happened to be. Back from the store. To the bus-stop. Back' (39). Kunzru writes that '[Arjun] sets out to discover America via regular ten-block walks to the store' (41). Kunzru's irony here demonstrates how digital immigrants like Arjun fail to gain a comprehensive knowledge of America due to their constrained experiences – the area that they manage to explore is no larger than that within walking distance. During the extended bench period, Arjun stays in a 'low-income area', being assigned to live with other Indian IT immigrants who lead a similarly immobile and disenfranchised life (42). While Arjun walks around and explores the new environment, he gradually loses motivation as time passes and he prefers to stay in 'a world where everyone looked more or less like him' (43). Arjun feels 'overwhelmed' when he enters 'middle-class' areas: in his mind, 'middle class' is 'an American word for *white*', and he is scared to 'move through crowds in which everyone was so tall and heavy, so *meaty*' (43). Arjun's preference to stay in the community where 'everyone looks like him' and his fear of entering the 'white' areas show how racialisation remains in place even in a purportedly borderless information world. By representing Arjun's shrunken world after migrating to America, the novel demonstrates how digital immigrants are situated at the margins of society and fail to adapt to the new environment despite

³⁵ Biao Xiang, *Global "Body Shopping": An Indian Labor System in the Information Technology Industry*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 5.

their positive outlook before their arrival.

However, there are positive signs of cosmopolitanism after Arjun gets a job in the computer security company Virugenix, where he works as an assistant tester in the anti-virus team. Arjun's existence in the company covertly contaminates the space of division, isolation, and indifference; his daily interactions with his colleagues in the workplace create everyday cosmopolitanism. In the novel, Virugenix is a world-famous computer security company – 'everyone knows it' and 'most computer users have Virugenix software somewhere on their machines' (53). From the first day he enters the company, Arjun manages to infuse the rigid working environment with human warmth. With each individual assigned to work in a 'standard six-by-six grey cubicle', the office is a space of strict division that blocks human connection; however, when Arjun arrives at the office, he sets out to 'decorate his workspace ... with a mixture of family and film pictures' (54). Although Arjun has no clearance to join the senior researchers who work in 'a private area walled off by Plexiglas panels', he tends to 'poke his head over the top of the cubicle like a meerkat' and eavesdrops on their arguments or newly outlined theories (55). The fact that Arjun 'pokes his head over the cubicle' and secretly listens to the senior researchers' discussions symbolises his potential to break down the barriers to interpersonal communication and signals his desire to disrupt the hierarchical culture in the company. Although Manuel Castells refers positively to the 'unbounded sociability' that is expected to emerge in an information age, saying that virtually established connections may also 'extend into face-to-face interaction', Kunzru presents a different picture in *Transmission*.³⁶ Creating 'private sonic space[s]' which are only violated in an emergency, most workers in Virugenix wear headsets while working, and they appear to be lost in the virtual world and avoid real-life communications (57). The interaction 'was via email, even if the participants occupied neighbouring cubicles', and 'in-house socializing that did exist was largely conducted through the circulation of entertaining data sets' (57). Feeling 'confused' and 'worried' about the mechanical ways in which they relate

³⁶ Manuel Castells, *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 119.

to each other, Arjun seeks to break the pattern (57). He craves conversation and endeavours to reconnect with people concretely: he ‘tentatively struck up nodding acquaintanceships with a Bengal who worked on firewalls and a Dilliwallah ... [in] the diagnostics product team’, and he also ‘took up an invitation to dinner with the Dilliwallah’s family’ (57). While other digital workers in Virugenix appear to be passive and indifferent, Arjun brings a human touch to the workplace, and he disrupts the hierarchical system and covertly contaminates the rigid digital culture.

The humane aspect of Arjun attracts Christine Schnorr, a colleague who works in the firewall group and has been accustomed to a mechanical way of thinking; the cross-border friendship between Arjun and Christine extends beyond the workplace to the private realm. With her preferred mode of social interaction being ‘the *interrogation*’, Christine epitomises the ‘estranged’ and ‘alienated’ nature of the labourers – to use Karl Marx’s terms – in the contemporary information capitalist society (62).³⁷ Christine enjoys ‘tinkering with people, taking them apart and putting them together’; treating people as if they are machines, she often fails to identify meaningfully with the people around her (64). However, Arjun appears to be a disturbing force and he gradually changes Christine’s stiff and mechanical ways of thinking and behaving. Christine finds a sense of ‘hiddenness’ and ‘great excitement’ in Arjun. She decides to ‘take the dorky Indian guy under her wing’ (64). Despite her habitually rational mindset, Christine’s decision to do so ‘has no rational basis’ (64). The humane aspect of Arjun intrigues Christine. Learning that Arjun does not know how to drive, she offers to teach him; while Christine ‘could be reasonably zen about the damage’ to her car, she notices ‘the weird moment when [Arjun] burst[s] into tears’ during their first lesson (67). Christine likes him. As she observes, when Arjun drinks, he ‘becomes animated, waving his arms and laughing’; curious about his background, Christine decides to learn more about him and watches Indian movies with him, and this signals the kind of cross-cultural exchange which is fundamental to

³⁷ See in Karl Marx, ‘Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft of 1857–58)’, in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Collected Works* (Volume 28), by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1986).

cosmopolitanism (67). Christine is touched and gradually influenced by the human warmth of Arjun – the sense of human contact is exactly what Christine lacks in a highly mechanised culture in the information capitalist society, and she partly regains it through her cross-border interactions with the Indian immigrant Arjun Mehta.

Despite the positive signs of cosmopolitanism, the fact that Arjun is the first person to be dismissed from Virugenix reveals the precarious condition of digital immigrants, who can easily lose their jobs when their company encounters financial difficulties or confronts seasonal lows in business. As Aneesh observes, contract labourers, such as the Indian IT workers migrating to the US through ‘body shopping’, must work harder and be technically more ‘savvy’ to survive, because ‘tomorrow [the company] may shelve this plan, shelve the credit risk management’, and it is always the contract labourers who leave first.³⁸ In *Transmission*, when Virugenix encounters a financial crisis, the board pledges to ‘cut operating costs across all divisions’, and Arjun becomes the first person to be dismissed from the company (93). Jennifer Johanssen, the deputy director of personnel at Virugenix, coldly says to Arjun that ‘in reality, Virugenix has no obligations to you’ when she discloses the news to him (96). Arjun does not have much room to bargain: although he implores management to let him stay and even offers to ‘work for less money’ and ‘do longer hours’, his appeal is declined (96). Among the colleagues, there are nuanced feelings of pity and empathy, but no one offers Arjun solid support. The Singaporean, who works on the diagnostic product team, asks Arjun ‘Are you OK’ in a tone both ‘concerned’ and ‘hesitant’ (99). Christine, the person who has been closest to Arjun, stands by his side and curses the boss, but when Arjun says to her ‘you are my last hope’, Christine is shocked, stating ‘I am your friend, OK? But there is no you and me’ (103). The fact that Arjun finds himself in a helpless and isolated situation at Virugenix reveals how digital immigrants are likely to be the most vulnerable group in times of difficulty. Although through daily interactions digital immigrants create localised forms of cosmopolitanism, the fact that they are easily expelled from the company suggests

³⁸ Aneesh, *Virtual Migration*, p. 45.

that such positive signs of cosmopolitanism are fragile and easily disrupted; their dissenting voices, and the active roles they play in the workplace, are short-lived, surviving only temporarily in the new environment.

Section Two: The Privileged Life of the Elites – The Privatising of Information and the Digital Empire

In contrast to Arjun, who finds himself in a precarious situation, Guy Swift, an English global business brand manager, is one of the elites who live a privileged life and enjoy the convenience brought by technological advancement. Guy Swift is a successful businessman: he is thirty-three years old, a UK citizen, and a paper millionaire, ‘twice Young British Market Visionary of the Year and holder of several Euro brand achievement awards’ (12). Kunzru foregrounds the wide ‘digital divide’ – to use Castells’ term – between digital labourers and the elites by representing the vertical distance between Arjun on the ground and Guy in the aeroplane when Guy is first introduced in the novel. Arjun does not have the chance to meet Guy, nor is Guy interested in connecting with underprivileged people like Arjun. While Arjun is dreaming about the prosperous life in ‘Amrika’ before heading to the United States, Guy, high up above him in a fancy aeroplane that happens to cross Indian airspace, is immersed in ‘a calculated series of pleasures and sensations’, sipping champagne and enjoying ‘the attendant’s android charm’ (13). Unlike Arjun, who does not have a car and lives a life of stagnation, Guy, constantly travelling by plane, seems to raise hopes for cosmopolitanism as he manages to ‘bring messages of himself from one point on the earth’s surface to another’ (13). However, Guy, who enjoys convenience in an information age, tends to indulge himself in a world of hyperreality and builds no strong connections with others. Heading towards the airport, he would feel ‘a chemical lift’ that ‘grow[s] as he check[s] in, blossoming into full presence as he step[s]...into the magical zone of TV monitors and international-marque goods’ (21). Guy has ‘a sense of angelic contentment’ when he enjoys the services in the aeroplane;

yet when he switches on the laptop and tries to compose an email to his girlfriend Gabriella, he is ‘confronted by the blank white screen’ and ‘could think of nothing to say’ (13). Guy lives a privileged life and enjoys his superior status, and yet he does not care to get acquainted with the underprivileged people like Arjun, nor does he concretely relate to his surroundings due to his indulgence in the hyperreality created by the information society.

As the marketing executive for the global advertising agency *Tomorrow**, Guy is conscious of the new demands in the information age, and he takes advantage of the opportunities to make greater profits for himself. Swift is a member of the ‘vectoralist class’ –who ‘control the vectors along which information circulates’ and ‘own the means of realizing the value of information’.³⁹ As the surname ‘Swift’ suggests, Guy is aware that things change rapidly in the current context of informatisation: believing that ‘the future is happening today’, he emphasises the importance of ‘creativity’ and urges his staff to ‘surf the wave of innovation’ to add value to his company *Tomorrow** (21). Guy’s emphasis on creativity and innovation is complemented with his consciousness of the need to establish a wider social network: he notes that ‘humans are social’, ‘we need relationships’ – which reflects his adaptation to the contemporary ‘network society’ where people are interconnected on a global scale (21). However, Guy’s success is based on the exploitation of the subordinate workers in the company. Although Guy’s stated commitment to the employees is to make ‘work fun and fun work’, the novel ironically represents how the staff, who have no time to rest, are compelled to ‘balance life and work by researching, auditing, analysing, conceptualizing, quantifying and qualifying, visualizing, editing, mixing and montaging, arranging, presenting...’ (122). Guy’s claim to make ‘Love’ the core idea of *Tomorrow**, and his emphasis that ‘humans are social’, ‘we need relationships’, also contradict his conviction about the superior status of the privileged few. Believing that ‘We were on top because we were better adapted to the environment of the global city’, Guy emphasises the superiority of ‘them’ – the vectoralist class – and

³⁹ Wark, ‘Information Wants to be Free’, p. 172.

keeps himself separate from the ordinary others (220, emphasis original). Guy believes that people like him are more successful because they know ‘how to network, how to manipulate the flows of money and information to produce **Results**’ (220, emphasis in the original text). As it turns out, the promise of social media ‘connectedness’ is always at some level a marketing exercise that seeks to obscure the main profit-making mechanisms of corporations.

Although Guy claims that he plans to develop *Tomorrow** into ‘an agency with an international profile’, he does not show sufficient respect for local cultures when he seeks to generate new business in overseas markets. This is shown by the way he deals with the clients in Dubai. As Manuel Castells notes in his analysis of East Asian business networks, culture plays an important part in forms of economic organisation, and yet some transnational businesses are only ‘ethnically rooted in the Anglo-Saxon experience’.⁴⁰ Guy is compelled to expand overseas markets and generate new business when *Tomorrow** encounters financial difficulties: one pitch he makes to save his firm is for the Desert Creek Golf Course in Dubai. Yet Guy’s failure is foreshadowed by his discomfort when he arrives in the foreign land. He feels ‘immensely disoriented’ upon arrival. Seeing the landscape as ‘some kind of Islamic Las Vegas’, Guy seeks to shake off the feeling of unfamiliarity and strangeness by mentally transforming what he sees in Dubai into western imagery that he is familiar with (178). The Desert Creek Golf Course is a representation of an ‘Old Economy’ based on the family business. As a golf lover, Mr Al-Rahman, the owner of the business, arranges for their negotiations to take place on the golf course; Guy, clumsy on the course, is confused about the choice of venue and fails to elaborate on his idea without PowerPoint and a handout (180). Preoccupied with the idea of innovation, Guy offers ‘to help Al-Rahman Resorts get a GPS reading on its location in the heart-and-mind topography of the consumer’ (183). However, the fact that he does not follow the local customs nor show sufficient respect for the native culture makes it hard for Guy to win global clients. Al-Rahman simply dismisses his idea, stating that

⁴⁰ Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, p. 206.

he only does business with people who respect the things he does (185).

On the other hand, the manner in which Guy strives to attract another potential client – the one related to the new Pan European Border Authority (PEBA) in the EU – signals the underlying trends of securitisation and border enforcement, despite the growing need to establish global networks. When setting up *Tomorrow**, Guy had felt inclined to ‘stick to what he knew’ despite the need to develop the global market: to him, it is preferable to ‘pitch for British youth-sector business’ and maybe only ‘reach out occasionally into alternative demographics’ (180). As he fails to win the pitch in Dubai, Guy transfers his attention to the EU and places much of his hopes on PEBA, an artefact of EU integration with the aim of ‘harmonizing the immigration and customs regimes of all the member states’ (130). In his endeavour to brand European customs and the immigration regime, Guy proposes to celebrate a culture of exclusivity and make Europe a place only for the privileged few. Guy thinks that Europe should be branded as ‘the world VIP room’, and they should ‘promote Europe as somewhere you want to go, but somewhere that’s not for everyone’ (257). In the age of digitalisation, the easy access to information, which can be used to identify and deport illegal immigrants, serves to guard the EU’s borders and maintain its superior status. To please his clients and secure the business, Guy agrees with them on information control. Guy says that ‘A common European border authority must have common information collection and retrieval’; he further argues that ‘Any proposal for the presentation of our border police must incorporate the information dimension’ (252). Despite his claim that ‘humans are social’, Guy proposes that ‘in the twenty-first century the border is not just a line on the earth’; in securing the business with PEBA he argues that ‘the border is everywhere’ (252). The way Guy makes the pitch to PEBA demonstrates the tendency towards regionalisation as opposed to globalisation in the information age, and the advancement of new technology is used to maintain control over the regional border. Through the representation of PEBA, *Transmission* directly critiques the EU as a cosmopolitan space of the privileged few maintained by secured borders through information control.

Section Three: Innate Subversive Forces and the Destabilised Information Capitalist Society – The Leela Virus, Cyberspace Rebellion, and Hacking Politics

Transmission consequently portrays an information capitalist society characterised by substantial inequalities between exploited digital workers and the elites who maintain their superior status. However, the novel also illustrates how destructive forces are embedded in the seemingly stable social system by exposing Arjun's dual identity: Arjun is not simply a digital worker but also has experience as a hacker, and his migration to America has planted seeds of uncertainty from the outset. Since childhood, Arjun has been interested in 'the grey area of the computing culture' and he has started to explore the field of hacking (108). When he was young, Arjun used to create 'several simple viruses' in the privacy of his bedroom, paying careful attention to making backups of his data in case he infected his own machine (108). After going to college, Arjun has 'proper access to the data riches of the net', and he further 'burrow[s] into the underground' (108). Giving himself the fake name *badmAsh* on the internet, Arjun frequently 'appear[s] on virus-exchange boards, offering to trade code for code' (108-9). The fact that Arjun has a history of hacking suggests that the line between 'Arjun as a digital worker' and 'Arjun as a hacker' is blurred, and he brings elements of uncertainty when he is later recruited as a digital worker in the United States. On the one hand, Arjun as a digital worker who operates according to social rules symbolises a constructive force in the host country to which he migrates. On the other, the Arjun who knows how to hack represents a potential threat to the hierarchical and exploitative social system. As it turns out, Arjun's contamination of American society starts from the time when he first sets out for the United States. Before departure, Arjun logs on to the network of North Okhla Institutes of Technology (NOIT), the place from which he graduated, copying the computer viruses he has created and deciding to take them to the United States – 'all his best toys were now etched on to the little silvered disks, ready to travel in a solid

state to America' (28). Arjun's arrival in the United States with a copy of computer viruses suggests that the danger of contamination is intrinsically embedded within the information capitalist society – notably, Arjun's dual identity as both a digital worker and a potential hacker means that the destructive forces in the information capitalist society cannot easily be separated from the constructive ones.

The fact that Arjun, who has a history of hacking, finds a position in the anti-virus company Virugenix illustrates the thin boundaries between 'hackers' and 'security personnel', which echoes Jussi Parikka's observation that 'security [is] a *system* problem'; when he gets fired, Arjun creates the Leela virus and disrupts the unjust and oppressive system of the company.⁴¹ Virugenix is described as the 'holy of holies' and has a reputation as 'the global computer security specialist'; it is dedicated to ensuring and strengthening digital security by identifying and eliminating malicious codes on computers (51-3). Nonetheless, Kunzru alludes to the undermined security system – which Virugenix claims to safeguard – by portraying how Arjun, as a potential hacker, easily passes the security check (and even enjoys the procedure) when he enters the company. At the campus gate, Arjun 'would smile and show his ID card to the security, who waved him through to the well-signed path that led to the Michelangelo building' (53). When he gets fired by Virugenix, Arjun, believing that 'when you write code you are in control,' creates the Leela virus as an attempt to put pressure on the company and win back his job (103). As Hardt and Negri state, 'the individual points are singularized in a thousand plateaus' in cyberspace, which means that the privileged people may not easily regain control due to the undetectable source of resistance in an age of informatisation.⁴² In *Transmission*, the Leela virus is 'not one thing' (and not even 'a group or a family'), but rather 'a swarm' and 'a horde' (113). Serving almost as an alter ego of Arjun, the Leela virus both amplifies and spreads Arjun's power. His boss Darryl Grant has no idea that Arjun, who secretly monitors the situation from behind the screen, is the person who has caused trouble for the company as a forceful protest against his unfair treatment (144-7). As the Leela virus

⁴¹ Parikka, *Digital Contagions*, p. 49.

⁴² Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 25.

spreads, clients from all over the world come to contact Virugenix, and yet the AV team, 'scrawling on the whiteboard and angrily crossing out each other's glyphs', cannot come up with a solution (144-5). Arjun, as both a digital worker and a hacker, manages to temporarily disrupt the unfair corporate system in Virugenix; since power is diffused and amplified in cyberspace, he is more capable of fighting for his rights and challenging exploitative mechanisms.

Arjun, whose aim is merely to keep his job, can hardly be seen as a consciously cosmopolitan person. In the end, he compromises with his boss and does not get rehired. Fearing that the situation has gotten out of his control, Arjun eventually tells Darryl Grant the way to detect and eliminate the Leela virus, in the hope of proving himself an indispensable team member and getting a second chance to work in Virugenix. However, Darryl takes the credit for the success in resolving the crisis, and he refuses to acknowledge Arjun's contribution or to give him back his job. As it turns out, Arjun is not powerful enough to confront Darryl, who belongs to a privileged class and maintains his superior status by exploiting other digital labourers. Although the Leela virus does not shake the superior status of Darryl, it does affect another person who shares certain qualities in common with him: that person is Guy Swift, who similarly belongs to the privileged class and maintains superiority by exploiting the workers in his company. By presenting the parallel images of Darryl and Guy and showing how Guy at a distance is affected by the Leela virus, the novel suggests that in an age of information, even an action created out of a purely private and even selfish motive may affect the wider public. It gives hope to cosmopolitanism because, although Arjun does not overpower Darryl, his action has the unintended consequence of challenging the superior status of Guy Swift, who is likewise a member of the exploitative class in society.

Guy, although owning the means of realising the value of information, proves to be vulnerable and helpless when he confronts the computer virus that provokes a crisis in *Tomorrow**. In the process of resolving the crisis, the interactions between Guy and Caedmon, the network administrator who has been unfairly treated in the company, demonstrate how the power relationship between the vectoralist class and

digital workers is reversed. In the novel, the Leela virus quickly spreads on the internet, and it attacks the office computer network in *Tomorrow**, causing temporary paralysis of the whole system in the company. In the beginning, Guy sees the virus as nothing but a ‘technical hitch’ (137). Habitually maltreating his employees and abusing his authority, Guy vents his anger on Caedmon, the technician, and threatens to fire him if he cannot restore the computer system of *Tomorrow** in good time. Wark argues the vectoralist class ‘produces nothing new’ – it only turns the new information created by others into its own private property.⁴³ The fact that those who exploit the value of information create nothing new suggests that they have little knowledge of new science and technology and thus have little control over risks and so they cannot manage to handle crises in times of emergency. In *Transmission*, Guy reflects that computers are ‘important and mysteriously beneficial’ to privileged business people like him, but it is ‘the job of the priesthood to engage with them,’ and he admits that ‘finding them with no technical support was like standing naked before the judgment of God’ (140). After firing Caedmon, no one manages to rebuild the computer network in *Tomorrow**. While Guy normally abuses his power at will, he is helpless when confronting the Leela virus and is heavily dependent on the digital workers. A reversal of power is evident when Guy is compelled to beg Caedmon to come back to *Tomorrow**. Caedmon seems ‘unfazed at losing his job’ and ‘didn’t sound surprised to hear from [Guy]’ when Guy pleads for him to come back to work. Guy even agrees to give Caedmon ‘an £8,000 rise and two extra weeks of paid holiday’ in compensation (139-140).

The fact that the Leela virus infects the computer network in PEBA, an organisation designed to make Europe a space of exclusion through rigid information control, further demonstrates that the privileged people cannot easily guard information borders as they did geographic borders in the past. In the novel, Signor Becca who works on informatics in PEBA proudly tells Guy that ‘the question of the border is a question of information’ (251). The first co-ordinated PEBA action is

⁴³ Wark, ‘Information Wants to be Free’, p. 165.

called ‘Operation Atomium’: its mission is to deport five thousand illegal immigrants from Europe, and all the actions are based on common information handling under the aegis of PEBA (254-5). However, the novel foretells the failure of the action by representing how the Leela virus slips through the information border and attacks Guy’s computer system when he, in efforts to please his clients, plays conspirator in the action by pledging his support and extending the ideas about information control. When Guy turns on his laptop, it does not work: ‘He clicked the icon. Nothing happened. He clicked again and the screen went blank’ (258). The fact that Guy temporarily loses control of his laptop signifies the elites’ inability to control information as they wish. As it turns out, the Leela virus manages to escape across the seemingly safely established information border in PEBA and it disturbs ‘Operation Atomium’: it ‘randomly reassociates database attributes, [and it is] responsible for the destruction of a huge number of EU immigration records before it [is] spotted’ (283). A reversal of power is evident when Guy falls victim to the ‘shuffling’ action of the Leela virus and is mistakenly deported from Europe: Irina, an Eastern European prostitute whom Guy spends a night with, steals his wallet and identity papers while he is drunk; later on, Guy is mistaken for an illegal immigrant and finds himself subject to an Operation Atomium-related immigration raid the following day. The obliteration of immigration records helps to disrupt an oppressive regime of control that rigorously monitors ‘outsiders’: this demonstrates the removal of the stringent barrier to political openness that is required for cosmopolitanism to flourish.

Section Four: Digital Disaster, Social Upheaval, and the Rise of Subpolitics

In its early stage, the Leela virus can be controlled by Arjun and its impact is confined to a relatively limited area. However, the variants of Leela – Leela 02, 03 and others – extend its influence to the world: as they develop, they expose the inefficiency of the nation-state in the face of global disasters. As Eugene Spafford observes, to some extent, computer viruses can be compared to a form of artificial life – ‘a self-

replicating organism’.⁴⁴ In *Transmission*, the Leela virus replicates; Leela 02, 03 and other variants soon emerge after the original Leela virus is quelled. The variants of Leela lead to global risk, bringing the world into an unprecedentedly chaotic situation. Noting the limits of the nation-state in handling world risks, Beck states that ‘the very idea of controllability, certainty, or security – which is so fundamental in the first modernity – collapses’.⁴⁵ In *Transmission*, Kunzru foregrounds governmental paralysis in times of the global virus outbreak. The federal government could not deliver clear instructions when ‘the Colorado state government sent a message to Washington’; Gavin Burger, the President’s spokesman, holds a conference that simply describes the ‘administration’s assessment of the situation as “pending”’ (153). The inefficiency of governmental leadership is exposed to the public by Burger’s wordy, ambiguous and even meaningless speech, which he delivers during the morning’s daily briefing. The speech, full of flamboyant vocabulary and complex sentences, is contentless. Burger comments that,

‘... any attempt to compromise or mitigate our ability to function effectively in terms of our critical infrastructure, whether that be in the realm of telecommunications, energy, banking and finance, water facilitation, governmental operational activity thresholds or the smooth and unhampered running of our essential emergency services, must be viewed as taking place within a framework strongly suggestive of deliberate negativization, threat or hostile intent. ...’ (154)

As it turns out, Burger’s governmental instruction does not resolve the continuing feeling of uncertainty – it even worsens the situation. The public feels increasingly insecure and anxious, and the widespread anxiety and fear begin to undermine the foundation of the nation-state from within. One father’s suspicion of his son shows how conflicts arise not from outside but within domestic space: ‘a man in Ottawa papered his bedroom in silver foil, convinced that his son’s PC had started to emit

⁴⁴ Eugene Spafford, ‘Computer Viruses as Artificial Life’, *Artificial life*, 1.3 (1994), 249-265.

⁴⁵ Beck, *World Risk Society*, p. 2.

harmful rays' (156). Alarms, which are 'mostly false', upset national order: they are raised in 'various US government offices, at power plants, dams and military bases' (156). Importantly, the fact that the prime suspect – the 'computer' – exists in every household reveals how the dangerous and threatening 'other' turns out to be one of 'us': now this '[is] the enemy within, a technological fifth column in the homes of ordinary Americans' (154). Desperate to seize the criminal, citizens across America 'start to look with suspicion at the computer on their desks' (154). However, the strange habit of staring at a lifeless 'computer' – which cannot be held responsible for the disaster – further challenges the division between enemies from outside and friends from within, which undermines the foundation of the nation-state and resonates with cosmopolitan ideals.

Written in the aftermath of the September 11 attack, the novel represents how people's fear of the computer virus is unjustly linked with the discourse of 'terror' and 'terrorism' – a term, as Liam Connell notes in his analysis of *Transmission*, that is becoming more loosely defined after 9/11.⁴⁶ As the language of terror is applied to too wide a range of activities, the term begins to lose its original power of differentiating 'self' from 'other'. As Connell states, after 9/11 'the language of terrorism has been applied to a widening range of activities which might not have colloquially been understood as terrorism in the past'.⁴⁷ *Transmission* shows how the meaning of terror expands. In the novel, people recollect that computers have 'always *terrorized* them in small ways', and they are now revealed to 'harbour something more sinister, something *with an agenda*' (154, emphasis added). Linked to the discourse of terror is the collective demand for 'revenge': 'a consensus [has] emerged that the attack should be avenged in blood' (154). However, although Arjun and the Leela virus pose threats, the computer virus outbreak still bears little resemblance to terrorism. The loosely defined 'terror' discourse and the random use of it render the term increasingly absurd

⁴⁶ Liam Connell, 'E-Terror: Computer Viruses, Class and Transnationalism in *Transmission* and *One Night@ the Call Center*', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 46.3-4 (2010), 279-290.

⁴⁷ Connell, 'E-Terror', p. 279.

and meaningless. Calling into ‘a nationally syndicated show’ on talk radio, Bobby from Topeka suggests torturing the suspected terrorist: as he says, ‘torture, ... that is the only way we’ll find out who’s behind this’ (155). However, when the host asks ‘torture who’, Bobby has no idea, simply saying ‘I don’t know’ (155). As it turns out, the abused language of terror, as well as the subsequent suggestion of revenge and torture, denudes those terms of their original power: it leads to an ambience where everything becomes a possible threat, and yet nothing can be located or guarded against.

Amid the widespread chaos and confusion, media plays an important role in raising cosmopolitan awareness: it alerts the public to the impending danger and presses the government into action; it also presents an awareness of distant suffering by producing shared exposure to the disaster. In *Transmission*, before the national government reacts to the virus outbreak, the press has seen ‘the international stories on the wires about the plant closure in Montevideo and the data-traffic brownouts in the Far East’ (154). The media, such as the *New York Times*, presses the government to offer concrete solutions and exposes its inefficiency, requiring to know ‘whether the administration could confirm or deny that the country was under attack’ (154). The media not only exerts influence at the institutional level but also raises public awareness about distant suffering and helps to generate a sense of empathy and cross-border solidarity. As Beck notes, ‘culture “sees” in symbols’: the media, by presenting vivid images, makes the global disaster publicly visible and draws attention to one’s own living space.⁴⁸ In the novel, Arjun watches the television alone at home and sees the arrest of a Swiss teenager, seventeen-year-old Thierry Hofmann, on CNN – ‘*Breaking news: virus suspect held*’ (158). Kunzru spends much time depicting the image of the young Swiss as he is presented on TV: he foregrounds Hofmann’s ‘absolute incredulity’ and his panicked expression as ‘a hand press[es] down on his head to ease him into the police car’ (158). It is that look which breaks Arjun – it ‘shattered the screen he had erected to shield him from what was taking place’ (158).

⁴⁸ Beck, *World Risk Society*, p. 71.

Through media channels, Arjun is exposed to distant suffering and feels increasingly guilty and empathetic towards the innocent stranger, as well as other previously unrelated strangers, whom he sees from a distance.

Transmission hints at the rise of ‘subpolitics’, or the ‘shaping of society from below’, by representing the mysterious character Nic (Christine’s boyfriend, who also used to be a hacker), who shows up during the social turbulence and assists Arjun in his escape from the police.⁴⁹ In the novel, Nic appears to be a carefree person: he seems to have little interest in attracting others’ attention and he does not care much about his surroundings. He has little connection with Arjun either: Nic has not met Arjun in person, and he remains indifferent even when Christine brings Arjun home and sleeps with him – ‘Nic was asking no questions, mired in his own hangover’ (92). By depicting Nick as an insignificant and largely detached figure, Kunzru shows how the connections between people tend to be imperceptible during normal times. However, when Arjun is forced to flee from the police after releasing the Leela virus, Nic, surprisingly, is suspected of complicity in his escape. Not until the police enter Christine’s house to investigate the case is Nic’s hidden identity revealed to the reader. Christine realises that the problem could be Nic – ‘nowadays he [is] just another engineer, setting up and maintaining data storage systems, but once upon a time, back in the prehistoric days of computing before the worldwide web and dotcoms and all the rest of it, he had been a very bad Eastern bloc boy indeed’ (192). While Christine, who used to have a close relationship with Arjun, is a more likely candidate to assist Arjun, Nic is the one who actually helps him escape. Nic represents the latent threats to the seemingly stable social order, which appear to be invisible in peaceful times but manifest themselves and make their voices heard in days of chaos and confusion. The hidden identity of Nic, which Kunzru refrains from mentioning to the reader throughout the novel, illustrates the ‘mysterious’ features of those subversive forces in society. Kunzru does not disclose the full name of Nic – ‘Nicolai Petkanov’, which looks like a common Bulgarian name – until the end of the novel. The suspected

⁴⁹ Beck, *World Risk Society*, p. 39.

accomplice to Arjun, being originally vaguely referred to as ‘a pony-tailed man’, is identified as ‘Nicolai Petkanov’ – ‘the boyfriend of the woman whose car Mehta stole when fleeing Redmond’ (291). From ‘Nic’ to ‘Nicolai Petkanov’, the identity of Nic becomes clearer as he plays a larger role in society during the days of upheaval. His collaboration with Arjun demonstrates how distinct individuals may bypass the institutions of the political system of nation-states and together reshape society from below.

The period of massive upheaval does not last long before the national government resumes its power: however, although the social system seems to be perfectly restored, the temporary disorder has left many gaps in society that are difficult to seal, and the newly developed subpolitics threaten the foundation of the national structure. At the end of the novel, the police find out that Arjun Mehta is the person who created the Leela virus; the computer virus outbreak is eventually suppressed and, at least ostensibly, everything goes back to normal. The novel shows how the nation-state’s power is reconsolidated by the representation of Arjun as an evil ‘other’ across mainstream media, which factually expels him from polite society. Arjun Mehta’s name stays in the headlines for days: he is depicted as the ‘evil scientist’ (*New York Post*), whose ‘twisted genius’ (*London Evening Standard*) has threatened the world with ‘techno meltdown’ (*Sydney Daily Telegraph*) (284-85). However, the influence of such a disturbing event is less easy to eliminate than it appears to be. Despite the immense investment of police time and resources, Arjun, whose image becomes one of the most widely circulated in the world, is not apprehended. The San Ysidro Factory Outlet Centre, where Arjun is last seen, ‘has become a favourite pilgrimage site for conspiracy theorists, who take notes and photographs’ (285). Organisations and interest groups develop in the locality and they inherit the rebellious spirit of Arjun, who has become more of a symbolic figure than Arjun the real person. Despite ‘being labelled a terrorist by governments and media agencies around the world’, ‘Arjun Mehta has admirers’; ‘the figures of the outlaw and the unrecognized genius are dear to many in the computer underground, and Mehta (combining both) has become a hero to a younger generation of disaffected hackers’ (287). As it turns out,

Arjun's influence exceeds his corporeal body: it gets dispersed everywhere, being wielded and directed by numerous others. Arjun's power becomes 'invisible': it is like a trace or a haunting memory, which has forever evaded regulation and plants the seeds of cosmopolitanism in the locality.

Conclusion

Hari Kunzru's *Transmission* has demonstrated the challenges to, and possibilities for, digital cosmopolitanism in the information capitalist society. One prominent message the novel conveys is that the information society is far from a borderless society: despite the establishment of globally networked companies or the seemingly free information exchanges on cyberspace, the novel shows that borders remain in place everywhere. Some borders take old forms (for example, Arjun's ghetto life in America shows that racialisation and class division retain their power in the new age), while some acquire new features (for example, PEBA establishes new information borders, rigorously monitoring 'outsiders' through big data systems). As the novel indicates, although information itself can be abstract, a more important factor is the 'relationship' between men and machines (and between men and information), which is influenced and shaped by the whole power structure in the information capitalist society. The novel forces us to see the wide digital divide between the exploited digital labourers and the elites who possess the value of information, and it demonstrates that the age of informatisation does not herald the end of oppression and inequality.

However, *Transmission* also shows the positive signs of digital cosmopolitanism. The novel suggests that inner destructive forces are embedded within the seemingly stable information capitalist society. The fact that Arjun is both a digital worker and a hacker erodes the boundaries between 'us' and 'them', which shakes the foundation of the hierarchical and exploitative social system. The novel also illustrates how the national order is severely challenged by the outbreak of a global disaster, which is triggered by Arjun's Leela computer virus. Notably, Arjun is not even a consciously

cosmopolitan person, which suggests that in networked information societies, even trivial events may radically change the world structure. However, although *Transmission* clearly demonstrates the disruption of national orders when a global disaster occurs, it does not offer an explicit answer as to what will happen afterwards. Instead, the novel presents two sharply opposing choices. One choice is to generate political capital via the continual search for enemies from outside, to provoke even stronger nationalist sentiments, and to invoke persistent fear of damaged national borders. In *Transmission*, this can be seen, for instance, in the abused language of ‘terror’ and ‘terrorism’, the thirst for ‘torture’, and the arbitrary arrest of innocent people, all of which fuel hatred and resentment. The other choice, in contrast, is the movement towards cosmopolitanism, which involves empathising with the suffering of strangers, the promotion of international cooperation, and the urge to establish ‘sub-politics’ and to shape societies from below. In *Transmission*, these positive signs of cosmopolitanism are evident in Arjun’s sympathy for the Swiss boy, in Nicolai Petkanov’s assistance in Arjun’s escape, and in those who disappear and then reappear after the end of the global disorder. I will conclude this chapter by drawing a comparison between my first chapter and my final chapter in terms of their cosmopolitan insights. While the thesis opened by showing how *The Unconsoled* represents the new cosmopolitanism that arose after 1989 on the threshold of a new age, it ends, again, ‘on the threshold of a new age’ and with a critical moment of choice between different pathways. The choices available now – towards cosmopolitanism or its opposite – will determine the future.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have investigated the connections between globalisation and the prospect of cosmopolitanism by examining four contemporary British works of fiction which capture a series of new world situations. What these novels have shown is both a series of cosmopolitan themes and new perspectives on the evolution of cosmopolitan thought. Each chapter has addressed a different aspect of cosmopolitanism, and the topics under discussion have been sequenced according to their relevance to contemporary life. The opening chapter on Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled* sets the tone for the thesis: reflecting on the historical moment after 1989, it captures the emergence of a new cosmopolitanism, which, unlike the old one, is rooted in the locality and can be detected in daily cross-border interactions. The following three chapters (on Smith's *On Beauty*, Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*, and Kunzru's *Transmission*) all focus on the events that are less extreme and closer to our everyday life: the topics include vernacular cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitan Islamic culture, and digital cosmopolitanism. Although the thesis seems to result in discrete chapters due to the relatively broad topics, the chapters are interconnected as the topics discussed in each chapter are not in separation from each other. For example, the chapter on *The Unconsoled*, which examines the citizens' interactions with Ryder, has already touched upon the issue of vernacular cosmopolitanism, which is the main topic of the second chapter on *On Beauty*. Chapter two and Chapter three together examine the relationship between globalisation and cosmopolitanism: they foreground the social-political factors that prevent the establishment of the cross-border relationship, and they also invite us to recognise the cosmopolitan potential of people from all backgrounds. The global chaos and anxiety portrayed in *Transmission* echo that represented in *The Unconsoled*, and both novels present us with a critical moment of choice – towards cosmopolitanism or its opposite – when social order is severely disrupted and when people across the world are confronting huge uncertainties. Notably, the depiction of the global disaster in *Transmission* also pointedly

corresponds with our current real-world condition during the Covid-19 pandemic. The overlap between fiction and reality, which cannot simply be seen as a coincidence, indicates that the issues of globalisation and cosmopolitanism are more urgent and relevant to us today than ever before.

I have defined the concept of cosmopolitanism in this thesis as a particular dispositional orientation and mode of practice for individuals. Cosmopolitanism concerns people's open attitudes towards foreign others and their endeavour to reach out across differences through dialogue, aesthetic enjoyment, and respect. Cosmopolitanism in the context of globalisation has several new defining features. Firstly, cosmopolitanism reaches more people and is more embedded than ever; it has become an 'actually existing' cosmopolitanism – to use Bruce Robbins' term – as the boundary between the local and the global is eroded by, for instance, international migration, glocal cohabitation, and digital communication. Secondly, the core idea of the new cosmopolitanism is 'universality plus difference': it places an equal emphasis on the local and the global, both highlighting a set of values commonly accepted and respecting the distinctiveness of the locality where a global vision is born. Thirdly, new cosmopolitanism defies 'either-or' logic: it does not imply detachment but rather (re)attachment and the proliferation of attachments – it endorses partial and flexible commitments to the local and the global, to our intimate family/friends and also to distant others. These distinct features of contemporary cosmopolitanism are what I have paid special attention to throughout the thesis. The four novels I analyse show the possibilities and limits of openness and hospitality towards global others in the context of globalisation, and the prospect of the triumph of partial commitments and flexibility over oppositional thought in the cosmopolitan mind.

The main contribution of this thesis to its field of study is that it illustrates the complexity of contemporary cosmopolitanism: the fictions taken together demonstrate both the challenges and possibilities in envisioning cosmopolitanism in the context of globalisation. In *Cosmopolitan Novel*, Berthold Schoene asserts that 'the new cosmopolitanism' is 'rooted in the realities of the present rather than mobilising for

the future fulfilment of ... utopian ideals'.¹ My thesis shows that, to some extent, cosmopolitanism has indeed become more 'real' because it is rooted in the locality and emerges from the realities of the present. In the novels, signs of cosmopolitanism are detected in the fictional characters' daily experiences and cross-border interactions, and seeds of openness and hospitality are embedded in multicultural metropolises or virtual communities. However, cosmopolitanism, although it is starting to emerge in reality, is far from 'being' a reality. In most cases, the grouped fictions only display the 'seeds' or 'traces' of cosmopolitanism. Positive signs of cosmopolitanism are limited in comparison to the depiction of concrete obstacles and the challenges to cosmopolitanism. What I have sought to foreground in the novels is their depiction of existing racial and cultural prejudice, plus economic disparity and political inequality in the globalised world. As Dominic Head recognises, 'the cosmopolitan identity often emerges as our single main resource of hope in combating the worst effects of globalization; and the novel is sometimes deemed to be a useful instrument in that endeavour.'² Although my chosen novels frequently show how cosmopolitanism may fail, I contend that they serve to encourage cosmopolitanism in their readers in at least two ways. These novels help us to detect the smallest traces of cosmopolitanism that tend to pass unrecognised in reality; although they highlight the dark sides of globalisation, they also enable us to develop a critical vision of cosmopolitanism by exposing the danger of being overly optimistic about the coming new age.

One important message conveyed by the chapter on Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled*, which sets the tone for this thesis, is the need to replace an old version of 'universal' cosmopolitanism with a contemporary cosmopolitanism that values the distinctiveness of the locality and rejects the temptation to worship those who ostensibly represent universal correctness. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was believed to herald the coming new age of cosmopolitanism. However, people at that

¹ Berthold Schoene, *Cosmopolitan Novel*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 10.

² Dominic Head, *The State of the Novel: Britain and Beyond*, (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2009), p. 96.

time tended to equate cosmopolitanism with the universal acceptance of Western experiences and values because the 1989 revolution was generally regarded as a sign of the ultimate triumph of the West. Representing the dynamics in post-1989 Eastern-Central Europe, *The Unconsoled* creates a platform to examine the unexpected encounter and clash between two distinct cultures – communism and capitalism – at that special historical moment. The novel demonstrates that copying Western experiences was not a feasible way out for Eastern-Central Europeans who craved stability and affluence after the collapse of the communist regime. The novel shows that although communism had failed in Eastern-Central Europe, a new social order could not be constructed out of an institutional vacuum. As illustrated by the local elites' endeavour to recreate a heroic figure (Mr Brodsky), people tended to follow the social and political practices of the communist past. *The Unconsoled* also exposes the problem with learning from the West through the portrayal of Ryder, who remains absentminded throughout the journey and behaves indifferently to the citizens who expect his assistance in restoring social order. Ryder's coldness to the local people illustrates how the West may have possessed a more dominant culture at that time but it adopted laissez-faire policies when it came to international assistance. The question of self-autonomy is also foregrounded in the novel: although the local people appear to respect Ryder, they are reluctant to completely rely on him or to hand over the right to govern their own city. *The Unconsoled* underlines the importance of balancing the relationship between the local and the global, between provincial autonomy and international interference, at the turning point of history. The complexity of post-1989 Eastern-Central Europe as represented in *The Unconsoled* foregrounds the key idea of 'universality plus difference' in contemporary cosmopolitanism; it stresses the need to discard the old version of 'universal' cosmopolitanism – which is, in essence, in line with imperialist thought – as people start to embrace new opportunities in an age of globalisation.

Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* and Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* focus on the condition of glocalisation, where foreign immigrants share the same local space with native-born citizens in hybridised and multicultural societies. The novels offer richly

ambiguous snapshots of cosmopolitanism: they show both positive and negative signs of cosmopolitanism in the context of glocal cohabitation. *On Beauty* illustrates the complexity of vernacular cosmopolitanism – a critical, oppositional vision and practice of cosmopolitanism thriving on the periphery – by representing how the disempowered, marginalised people encounter and interact with the privileged others in a hybridised university college town. The novel warns against being overly optimistic about cosmopolitanism by showing that geographical boundaries remain firmly in place in a seemingly inclusive society where the underprivileged people often do not have the chance to meet or interact with privileged others. *On Beauty* also foregrounds the hidden factors – such as individuals’ personal histories or their distinct social and economic conditions – that are at work during face-to-face cross-border interactions: these hidden social and cultural factors embedded in the cross-border encounter all add complexity to vernacular cosmopolitanism. In comparison, *Maps for Lost Lovers* demonstrates the possible emergence of cosmopolitan Islam among a Pakistani diaspora endeavouring to balance an adherence to Islamic tradition and culture with the need to adapt to new environments in the context of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century migration to Britain. In the novel, the Muslims start to reflect on certain elements in Islamic tradition and culture that are no longer compatible with their current and specific condition of globalisation. Some Muslims draw inspiration from what they have seen and experienced in the western context, and they contribute to the birth of a ‘hybridised’ Islam that is neither East nor West. *Maps for Lost Lovers* shows that the result should be regarded as a ‘globalised Islam’, changing and evolving in the context of globalisation.

Despite the ambiguities represented in the two novels, I would contend that one clear message they both reinforce, which is a precondition of envisioning cosmopolitanism, is the rejection of any belief in the fundamental differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The novels invite us to recognise that people from diverse backgrounds all have the potential to be cosmopolitan, and seemingly distinct religions and cultures may share much more in common than one normally imagines. Cosmopolitanism was once believed to be the exclusive privilege of the elites;

according to this view, working-class, dispossessed immigrants or refugees could not be cosmopolitan. However, in *On Beauty*, the dispossessed Haitian immigrants demonstrate the intention to be cosmopolitan and make concrete efforts to become cosmopolitan. They appear to be hostile or dangerous mostly because they are gazed at during silent encounters and unfairly judged by their skin colour or clothes. After 11 September 2001, a popular idea was that Islamic religion and culture were fundamentally incompatible with others, and thus Muslims, ‘by nature,’ could not be cosmopolitan. Aslam’s *Maps for Lost Lovers* reveals that such beliefs are mistaken. In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Kaukab, as an orthodox Muslim, frequently refers to the Quran as a book which underscores her cosmopolitan ambitions – as Osman Baker stresses, cosmopolitan ideas are embedded in the Quran, and since ancient times Muslims have valued ‘such Quranic ideas as common human ancestry, common humanity, universal goodness of the human being’.³ My personal experiences echo the conclusions I have drawn from my literary studies. One day I came across an English gentleman, and he kindly asked me why I, as a Chinese, decided to study ‘cosmopolitanism’, because he assumed that cosmopolitanism was a ‘western’ term. Yet I am quite sure that cosmopolitanism is not western: such ideas as ‘Da Tong (Great Unity)’ in *Liji* (Book of Rites), or the statement ‘视天下为一家,中国犹一人 (Regarding the world as one family, and China as one family member)’ by the ancient Chinese philosopher Wang Yangming, all demonstrate the rich cosmopolitan ideas in Chinese culture. We are all human. Do not take more specific classifications seriously. Yet the biggest challenge to cosmopolitanism is the presumption that certain groups of people are fundamentally different or certain cultures are essentially incompatible with others: labouring under that misconception, we are reluctant to reach out to global others despite their geographical proximity.

The final chapter on Hari Kunzru’s *Transmission* examines the feasibility of digital cosmopolitanism by focusing on the contemporary information society where the spread and exchange of information are essential to social and economic activities.

³ Osman Bakar, ‘Islam’s Destiny: A Bridge Between East and West’, *JUST Commentary*, 33 (1996), 1-5 (p. 2).

As Langdon Winner notes, ‘the arrival of any new technology that has significant power and practical potential always brings with it a wave of visionary enthusiasm that anticipates the rise of a utopian social order’.⁴ *Transmission* warns against being naively optimistic about the coming new age. Representing the inequality between the elite Guy Swift and the Indian IT worker Arjun Mehta, the novel demonstrates that the coming information age does not herald the end of oppression and exploitation. However, *Transmission* also invites us to note the emergence of cosmopolitanism by dramatising how people cope with a period of global disorder and upheaval triggered by the spread of computer viruses. In the days of computer virus outbreaks, the previously hidden social and political problems within nation-states are newly exposed to the public. The novel shows the positive signs of cosmopolitanism when people across the world collectively witness and experience social and political upheaval, and bonds between strangers are forged in virtual communities and extend to a real world that is not confined by national boundaries. Furthermore, the underlying implications of *Transmission* are valuable in suggesting areas for more research on globalisation and cosmopolitanism. For instance, in its representation of how men lose control of what they produce on computers (such as computer viruses), *Transmission* hints at the necessity for further research on ‘posthuman’ cosmopolitanism, taking account of the degree to which people are increasingly reliant on new technologies. The final chapter also foregrounds the idea of ‘global risk’ and compelled cosmopolitanism – *Transmission* alerts us to the mounting uncertainties and risks that no single nation can resolve by itself.

It is no exaggeration to say that we are now at some form of turning point in history. To quote a famous line by Lenin, ‘there are decades in which nothing happens, and there are weeks in which decades happen’. Painful memories are still fresh from the time when millions of lives around the world were lost during the Covid-19

⁴ Langdon Winner, ‘Sow’s Ears from Silk Purses: The Strange Alchemy of Technological Visionaries’, in *Technological Visions: The Hopes and Fears that Shape New Technologies*, eds. by Sturken, Marita, Douglas Thomas, and Sandra Ball-Rokeach (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), p. 34.

pandemic. On 24 February 2022, as I was putting the finishing touches to this thesis, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The war will almost certainly be the biggest conflict in Europe since 1989, and perhaps 1945, and it will likely be transformative. At the same time that I am typing these lines on my laptop – trying to seize the final chance to advocate my ideas on ‘cosmopolitanism’, current geopolitical developments once again seem to cast doubt not only on academic enquiry into cosmopolitanism, but on the prospects of peaceful global coexistence in the future. Events in the preceding few years seem to evidence that a cosmopolitan future is growing less, rather than more, imaginable. Literature does not offer a definite answer, and literary critique cannot offer a quick solution or replace the real-world actions of every one of us. From my perspective, what literature and literary critique can do is to enable us to tour parallel universes – some are exciting, some are dangerous, some are hostile and violent, some are peaceful and prosperous. We are given the opportunities to weigh and examine, explore and evaluate, but ultimately, it is we who decide which universe we are to dwell in, and it is we together who determine our future. But if there were a universe called ‘cosmopolitanism’, I believe a reasonable number of people have already been standing by the entrance, holding banners, distributing flyers, and loudly proclaiming the cause of ‘Cosmopolitanism: Citizens of the World’.

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