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The 'cosmopolite' in strange places: provincial cosmopolitanism and a sense of the past in the writings of George Eliot, Henry James, and William Archer's Henrik Ibsen

100,000 words including footnotes but excluding title, table of contents, bibliography, and copy of thesis abstract

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Introduction: Cosmopolitanism and provincialism in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature

The English words 'provincial' and 'cosmopolitan', used either in juxtaposition or conjoined as a phrase, acquired a nexus of meanings between the 1860s and the 1910s. The relative novelty of the word 'cosmopolite' in the nineteenth century, its inbuilt moral ambiguity, its dialectical relation to notions of the 'provincial', and the various views of the world implicit in it, give it an ambiguous charge that makes it stand out in nineteenth-century literature. My thesis seeks to uncover a distinct 'provincial cosmopolitanism' at the heart of a variety of literary works from the second half of the 'long' nineteenth century (1789-1914), in the period following the failed European revolutions of 1848: George Eliot's historical novel, *Romola* (1863); Henry James's novels of contemporary life, *What Maisie Knew* (1897) and *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), as well as his incomplete science-fiction novel *The Sense of the Past* (begun 1900, resumed and broken off in 1914, and published in 1917); and William Archer's 1890s English translations of the dramas of Henrik Ibsen, specifically *Peer Gynt* (1867), *Emperor and Galilean* (1874), *The Pillars of Society* (1877), *A Doll's House* (1879), *Ghosts* (1881), *An Enemy of the People* (1884), *Rosmersholm* (1886), *Hedda Gabler* (1890), *John Gabriel Borkman* (1896), and *When We Dead Awaken* (1899).[1]

In tracing what I call 'provincial cosmopolitanism' in the above texts, I am partly retracing, but also cosmopolitanizing and queering, the national 'great tradition' famously established

[1] On the concept of the 'long' nineteenth century, see Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848* (1962; London: Abacus, 2003), *The Age of Capital: 1848-1875* (1975; London: Abacus, 2004), and *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914* (1987; London: Abacus, 2003), for the theoretical basis of this now-standard periodization. The period between the French Revolution of 1789 and the European revolutions of 1848 marks a transitionary period in literary nationalism, according to Hobsbawm: 'It is plainly no accident that the revival or birth of national literate cultures in Germany, Russia, Poland, Hungary, the Scandinavian countries and elsewhere should coincide with—and should often be the first manifestation of—the assertion of the cultural supremacy of the vernacular language and of the native people, against a cosmopolitan aristocratic culture often employing a foreign language' (*The Age of Revolution*, 311). However, Hobsbawm also contends that, in the United States during the later nineteenth century, '[i]t was the old New England families […] such as the Jameses and the Adamses, that men and women distinctly ill at ease in their society were to be found' (*The Age of Empire*, 186), and moreover that we cannot 'detect much of a crisis of bourgeois confidence in the smaller western countries entering upon their era of economic transformation – such as the "pillars of society" in the provincial Norwegian shipbuilding town about whom Henrik Ibsen wrote a celebrated and eponymous play (1877)' (*The Age of Empire*, 187). Post-1848 Western literary culture, of which George Eliot, Henry James and Henrik Ibsen are three important manifestations, was in some measure dissatisfied, Hobsbawm implies, with the provincial nationalism ushered in by 1848 and the economic transformations of the industrial revolution; but nor was it prepared to return to the 'cosmopolitan aristocratic culture' of an earlier age, idly detached from those incipient economic changes. Hobsbawm's Marxist understanding of cultural history is useful in pointing out these stirrings of discontent, but writers' manifold attempts to reconcile cosmopolitanism and provincialism in the period, in particular through an emphasis on the importance of a sense of the past, has been neglected in literary studies otherwise indebted to Hobsbawm's periodization.

by F. R. Leavis.[2] I replace Leavis's tradition with my own genealogy, which departs from Leavis at the point at which he turns from James to Joseph Conrad: unlike Leavis, I analyse the creation and presentation of character in both the novel and drama. But I also analyse narrative structure, genre, and, in Archer's Ibsen, the possibility of translating form as well as content. Throughout, I am concerned with the *historicization* of cosmopolitanism at work in these authors, and with their ethical interest in redeeming cosmopolitanism from the prevailing stereotype of the period, namely a cold cynicism or a deracinated, bloodless attitude. I argue that cosmopolitanism in the literature of this period is not so much a superficial pose, or even what Bruce Robbins and Pablo Lemos Horta call 'an unhealthily skinny ethical abstraction',[3] but rather a *mode of historical consciousness* that encompasses a range of characters and a range of literary forms. 'Provincial cosmopolitanism' is in this sense the opposite of what Amanda Anderson has identified as a persistent 'cultivation of detachment' in Victorian literature,[4] and different again from what Helen Small identifies as the 'cosmopolitan cynic' character manifested in certain texts by Eliot.[5]

While I do not seek to overturn these scholars' understanding of cosmopolitanism in relation to nineteenth-century literature, I depart from them by tracing a different ethical strand that has been neglected in view of the enduring associations between cosmopolitanism, lofty detachment, and adversarial cynicism: cosmopolitanism as an experience. Thomas Bender's recent essay, 'The Cosmopolitan Experience and Its Uses' (2017), convincingly argues 'that cosmopolitanism is most usefully understood as an *experience* with both cultural and political implications', in part because 'the world of difference, the foundation of cosmopolitanism, is a domain of inevitable uncertainties and recalculations about oneself and of people and places.'[6] Throughout my thesis, I relate this literary theorization of cosmopolitanism to character and characterization. I hope to expand on it, however, by showing that such experience is a matter of historical consciousness as much as confrontation with immediate

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[2] See F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948).

[3] Bruce Robbins and Pablo Lemos Horta, 'Introduction', in Bruce Robbins and Pablo Lemos Horta (eds), *Cosmopolitanisms*, with an afterword by Kwame Anthony Appiah (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 1-17 (1).

[4] Amanda Anderson's valuable study, *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), explores the association between cosmopolitanism and the aspiration towards a stance of detachment.

[5] Helen Small, 'George Eliot and the Cosmopolitan Cynic', *Victorian Studies* 55:1 (Autumn 2012), 85-105 (86), notes that 'Amanda Anderson and Kwame Anthony Appiah have been particularly influential on literary theorizing of cosmopolitanism'. Yet *Romola*, Eliot's most superficially cosmopolitan novel, is notably absent from their criticism.

[6] Thomas Bender, 'The Cosmopolitan Experience and Its Uses', in Robbins and Horta, *Cosmopolitanisms*, 116-126 (126).

cultural difference. It is this focus on historical consciousness that informs my references throughout this thesis to the German idealist philosophers Immanuel Kant and G. F. W. Hegel, in particular to Kant's idea of history being written with a cosmopolitan purpose, and to Hegel's idea of history as the progress of an abstract world-spirit.

The idea of cosmopolitanism as ethically impoverished was exemplified, in the fiction of Eliot's time immediately preceding *Romola*, by the unforgettable character of Count Fosco in Wilkie Collins's hugely popular novel *The Woman in White* (1859-60). Fosco is the quintessential 'bad' cosmopolite: an aristocratic *dilettante*, detached, presentist, and self-interested, whose lip-service to cultural relativism is used as a smokescreen for determinedly unscrupulous behaviour. Fosco is a self-proclaimed 'citizen of the world' who has 'met, in my time, so many different sorts of virtue, that I am puzzled, in my old age, to say which is the right sort and which is the wrong. Here, in England, there is one virtue. And there, in China, there is another virtue. And John Englishman says my virtue is the genuine virtue. And John Chinaman says my virtue is the genuine virtue. And I say Yes to one, and No to the other, and am just as much bewildered about it in the case of John with the top-boots as I am in the case of John with the pigtail.'[7]

One kind of 'cosmopolite' character, I hope to show, is found not in metropolitan centres or undertaking grand tours but in strange, out-of-the-way, remote, 'provincial' places, and is defined less by socio-geographical exclusivity and the cultivation of detachment than by the cultivation of an acute and often ethically valuable historical consciousness. The fundamental moral *risk* of the development of a merely bloodless cosmopolitan attitude, and the possibility of averting it by the substitution (in provincial surroundings) of a more acute historical consciousness, is one major theme of these texts and one major preoccupation of these authors. In Eliot's historical novel, *Romola*, and James's contemporary novels, historical consciousness equates to an individual sense of the past and is conveyed via psychological drama; in Archer's Ibsen, it equates to a concern with history in a broader Hegelian sense, including the future course of events, and here, sociological analysis plays a significant role. I hope to show how Archer's rendering and understanding of Ibsen is related to the former's sociological world-view, exemplified in his polemical essay *The Great Analysis: A Plea for a Rational World-Order* (1912), in which he finds that a cosmopolitan or globalist attitude must be recognised in precisely provincial and local terms. I also wish to emphasize Ibsen's own

[7] Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White* [1859-60], edited with an introduction and notes by John Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 237.

sense throughout his dramas of 'cosmopolitanisation', or the cultivation of a cosmopolitan attitude, through history as well as geography. For all three of the writers I focus on, cosmopolitanism has a temporal as well as a spatial dimension.

Across my thesis as a whole, the earliest text with which I am concerned is Eliot's *Romola*, and the latest (in publication terms) Henry James's *The Sense of the Past* (1917): the texts by Henrik Ibsen with which I am concerned all fall between these two dates, and in their published English translations date in book form only from 1890. In publication terms, *Romola* is therefore by some measure the earliest text within the compass of my study. *The Sense of the Past* (1917) is the latest, though its first draft predates *The Wings of the Dove*. The original Dano-Norwegian publication dates of Ibsen's plays all fall between *Romola* and *The Sense of the Past*, but their published English translations, beginning in the 1890s, culminate in Archer's authorized Collected Edition of 1906-12. I have chosen this time frame and these three authors – or four, if one includes Archer as a translator-critic in his own right – partly because Eliot has been critically aligned with James at least since Leavis's *The Great Tradition* (1948), and James with Ibsen at least since Leon Edel's edition of James's plays, published in 1949.[8] But my choice has also been influenced by the fact that in historical terms, the Italian *Risorgimento* (Italy was proclaimed a unified kingdom in 1861) and the American Civil War (1861-65), as much as the European revolutions of 1848 and the rise of the British Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century, can be said collectively to mark a watershed in directing literary approaches towards cosmopolitanism.[9]

The historical significance of these events points Eliot, James, and Ibsen towards the importance of history itself, and, pertinently for their understanding and representation of cosmopolitanism, towards the importance of a sense of the past. While cosmopolitanism as a concept is in essence a spatial or geographical one (the *cosmos* and the *polis* are first and foremost *places*), I seek to uncover the importance, in Eliot, James, and Ibsen, of a historical, temporal dimension to understandings of the cosmopolitan. Far from being simply a marker of a wide range of geographical and cultural experience, their common understanding of cosmopolitanism, both in their formal choices and in their characterological depictions, encompasses, crucially, a sense of the past. In this sense, as I hope to demonstrate, cosmopolitanism is subtly historicized in the work of these three formidable nineteenth-

[8] See Henry James, *The Complete Plays of Henry James*, edited by Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1949).
[9] On Eliot and Empire, see Nancy Henry, *George Eliot and the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

century writers, enriching the meaning of the term and lending it an important, much-needed ethical dimension.

The word ‘cosmopolitan’ does not appear in Eliot’s fiction before the 1860s; James’s earliest published fiction dates from just after his perusal of *Romola* as a young man in America; and Ibsen’s explicit engagement with the idea of cosmopolitanism begins, early and satirically, with *Peer Gynt* (1867). My thesis begins with Eliot because she was the first of these three writers to confront this problem of what cosmopolitanism looks like at a characterological and a narrative level, and what justifies it ethically so that it moves beyond a static and sterile presentism. Throughout my thesis I trace the genealogy of an intellectual problem: the problem of the seemingly de-historicized ‘cosmopolite’, sometimes self-fashioned and sometimes accidental, sometimes Machiavellian and sometimes naïve, as expressed in three literary forms: the Eliotic historical novel, the Jamesian contemporary novel, and the Ibsenian prose drama in Archer’s English translations. Throughout, my concern is with the strangeness of the cosmopolitan predicament, and with the stylistic modes of representing it aesthetically and confronting it ethically.

The words ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘provincial’, used in reference to the pre-1914 world, became part of fictional discourse in the post-war world of the 1920s. In D. H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1928), for example, we can see the range of associations that the idea cosmopolitanism had acquired, and how any idea of the ‘cosmopolitan’ had become indelibly linked to its shadow, the ‘provincial’. In this post-war work, Lawrence demonstrates the rueful historical hindsight that is itself a demonstration of the historical consciousness I seek to uncover in pre-1914 literature. In the opening chapter, Lawrence describes the Edwardian upbringing of Constance Reid and her sister Hilda, daughters of an artistic and political family. Constance is a ‘country-looking girl’ who ‘seemed just to have come from her native village’, but this, we learn, ‘was not so at all’:

> Her father was the once well-known R.A., old Sir Malcolm Reid. Her mother had been one of the cultured Fabians in the palmy, rather pre-Raphaelite days. Between artists and cultured socialists, Constance and her sister Hilda had had what might be called an aesthetically unconventional upbringing. They had been taken to Paris and Florence and Rome, to breathe in art, and they had been taken in the other direction, to the Hague and Berlin, to great socialist conventions, where the speakers spoke in every civilised tongue, and no-one was abashed.

> The two girls, therefore, from an early age were not in the least daunted either by art or by ideal politics. It was their natural atmosphere. They were at once cosmopolitan and provincial, with the cosmopolitan provincialism of art that goes with pure social ideals.[10]

This summary of Constance's background foreshadows her dissatisfaction with her husband Sir Clifford's cerebral life, resulting in a passionate affair with his gamekeeper, Oliver Mellors. The latter's appearance, like Constance's, is deceptive, and he could also be described as a 'provincial cosmopolitan', since his rugged self-isolation in his gamekeeper's hut conceals a cosmopolitan youth spent 'abroad, as a soldier: India, Egypt, then India again', before he returned to 'his native place'.[11]

Lawrence also sees 'provincialism' in terms of art, by which he means the seemingly narrow obligation to 'breathe in art' imposed on Connie and Hilda as girls who are made to visit many of the famous sites on the conventional upper-middle-class European tour of the period. This 'provincialism of art' is also 'cosmopolitan', however, since it absorbs the art *in situ,* regarding the geographical and cultural context as inextricable from the artwork. What renders the sisters' upbringing 'aesthetically unconventional' – paradoxically 'cosmopolitan and provincial' – is its inclusion of politics: their 'cosmopolitan provincialism of art' 'goes with pure social ideals', hence their being 'taken in the other direction […] to great socialist conventions'.

Lawrence's usage consolidates in retrospect the complex range of meanings that had become attached to the words 'cosmopolitan' and 'provincial' by the First World War. Of course, Lawrence was writing some years after the War had ended, and the narrating voice emphasizes the historic, world-ending nature of the cataclysm, hence the 'palmy, rather pre-Raphaelite' (suggesting prelapsarian, innocent, and in chronological terms early Victorian) days of Constance's mother's socialism. But Lawrence's sense of the absolute and unbridgeable historical gap between pre- and post-War Europe also subtly implies that a sense of historical continuity and accessibility was something Constance, Hilda, and their Victorian parents took for granted before 1914. Symbolically, Sir Malcolm (in the first draft of the novel) had been 'made a knight for painting "historic" pictures';[12] such 'history painting' was already outmoded prior to the Great War. If 1915 for Lawrence was the year

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[10] D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* [1928]; *A Propos of "Lady Chatterley's Lover"*, edited by Michael Squires (1993; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 6.
[11] Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 141. Lawrence's contemporary and admirer E. M. Forster undertook the same itinerary as a civilian and conscientious objector before, during, and after the First World War.
[12] D. H. Lawrence, *The First and Second Lady Chatterley Novels*, edited by Dieter Mehl and Christa Jansohn (1999; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 114.

'the old world ended',[13] it was by extension the year that all idea of continuous history, all sense of a reachable past, died.[14]

'Cosmopolitan[ism]' prior to 1914 is therefore construed on a number of levels: the prolific consumption of visual art (which means seeing it, as far as possible, *in situ*); collaborative socialist and internationalist politics (meeting at large conferences); private 'pure social ideals' (a matter of theory more than practice); and, most notably, a paradoxical 'provincialism' that is manifested both in a narrow 'breath[ing] in [of] art' (following the guidebooks) and in a cultivation of an effortless 'natural atmosphere' that belies and even eschews the appearance of artistic cultivation. Though Lawrence does not say so, Oliver Mellors' cosmopolitanism, on this last count, is as pronounced as Lady Chatterley's: despite disavowing his cosmopolitan pre-War and wartime experiences, Mellors still cultivates his own 'natural atmosphere' while living at the edge of Sir Clifford's prototypically 'provincial' (because dull, unchanging, culturally monolithic) country estate.

The history of the English word 'cosmopolitan', a word that Lawrence associates with an already dead past, is at once anciently remote and disconcertingly recent. The ancient Greek word from which all modern European equivalents derive, *kosmopolitês*, is first attributed to the philosopher, Diogenes ('the Cynic'), by his namesake Diogenes Laertius. On being asked where he came from, Diogenes famously replied, 'I am a citizen of the world.'[15] Despite its ancient pedigree, and the popularity of Enlightenment works such as Louis-Charles Fougeret de Monbron's novel, *Le Cosmopolite* (1753) (which first Gallicized the word), and Oliver Goldsmith's satire, *The Citizen of the World* (1762), use of the English word 'cosmopolite' as both noun and adjective dates largely from an early-nineteenth century revival.[16]

Washington Irving, one of the first internationally celebrated American writers, was also the first author to use the epithet 'cosmopolite' in modern times, in the aftermath of the American and French Revolutions. The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites Irving's satirical *A History of New York* (1809) as the first instance of the word's use in English since a few obscure, self-

[13] D. H. Lawrence, *Kangaroo* [1923], edited by Bruce Steele (1994; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 216.
[14] Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* (1947), another modernist novel written in retrospect about the pre-1914 world, describes the protagonist, Adrian Leverkühn, as combining in his nature 'old-German provincialism' and 'out-and-out cosmopolitanism' (Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus: The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkühn As Told by a Friend* [1947], translated by H. T. Lowe-Porter [London: Vintage, 2015], 239).
[15] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, translated by Pamela Mensch, edited by James Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 288.
[16] See Louis-Charles Fougeret de Monbron, *Le Cosmopolite, ou Le Citoyen du Monde* (Aux depens de l'Auteur, 1750); Oliver Goldsmith, *The Citizen of the World* [1762], edited by Austin Dobson (London: J. M. Dent, 1891).

consciously classical uses in the seventeenth century: the noun was 'apparently revived early in the 19th cent, and often contrasted with *patriot*, and so either reproachful or complimentary. To this 19th cent. revival nearly all the derivatives belong.'[17] Indeed, the term 'cosmopolite' carries an inbuilt tension between the *cosmos* (world) and the *politês* (citizen; in this context, the inhabitant of a city). It is unavoidably ironic, therefore, that the prototypical 'cosmopolite', Diogenes, chose to reside outside the *polis* (Athens) towards which he directed his cynical observations, and to which his coinage uneasily refers: he was no city-dweller, then, but rather a city-shunner and deliberately 'provincial'. Lorenzo Dow's *History of a Cosmopolite* (1814), the autobiography of an itinerant preacher, and a work second only to the Bible as a bestseller in early nineteenth-century America, undoubtedly follows Irving's usage, but reclaims the word as a badge of honour.[18] As we shall see, this moral ambiguity, veering somewhere between pride and shame, admiration and opprobrium, characterized the word throughout the nineteenth century.

The Anglo-Irish satirist Jonathan Swift, on whom Irving modelled some of his own satire, provides, in a work of 1709, the first known example of the use of the English word 'provincial' to mean 'parochial or narrow-minded'.[19] Although 'provincial' in this depreciative sense had therefore been used for a century prior to Irving's mock-depreciative revival of 'cosmopolite' in 1809, its widespread use in this sense, much like 'cosmopolite', did not occur, at least in periodical literature, until the 1860s. Iain Duncan makes the important point that despite 'the rise of a derogatory association of "provincialism" with inferiority and backwardness in the periodical literature of the 1860s', this usage also 'coincides with the splendid zenith of mid-Victorian fiction, from *Cranford* to *Middlemarch*, in which "provincial life" [George Eliot's phrase] assumes the burden of national representation.'[20] Josephine McDonagh restates this: in the sphere of the English novel, '[a]round 1850,' provincial fiction 'comes into prominence […] the provincial now becomes "the world" […] until the mid-1870s when […] a new and distinctive form of regional novel

[17] "cosmopolite, n. and adj.". OED Online. September 2019. Oxford University Press. https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2446/view/Entry/42264?redirectedFrom=cosmopolite (accessed October 18, 2019).
[18] See Lorenzo Dow, *History of a Cosmopolite; or, The Writings of Rev. Lorenzo Dow: containing his experience and travels, in Europe and America, up to near his fiftieth year. Also, his polemic writings. To which are added, the "Journey of a Life," by Peggy Dow. Revised and corrected with notes* (1814; Cincinnati: Anderson, Gates & Wright, 1858).
[19] "provincial, adj. and n.". OED Online. June 2021. Oxford University Press. provincial, adj. and n. : Oxford English Dictionary (accessed 28 June 2021).
[20] Iain Duncan, 'The Provincial or Regional Novel', in *A Companion to Victorian Fiction*, edited by Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 318-335 (323).

takes over.'[21] This paradox, 'the provincial' as 'the world', is directly related to the proliferation of the historical novel in the same period, and to what John Bowen calls the 'greatest difficulty of writing historical fiction [during the Victorian or any period], that of creating an authentic historical idiom for periods and countries that have to be imagined, not seen or heard.'[22]

In the absence of such readily available and translatable authenticity, the terms 'provincial' and 'cosmopolite', each coming into their own in critical discourse by the 1860s, perform, I suggest, the function of providing a natural lens through which to view the imaginative literature of the same period. Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) is the culminating text in this cultural debate. Arnold's contrasting of, on the one hand, the 'Roman Catholic' and 'Jewish' religious 'Establishments', which he calls 'cosmopolitan', with, on the other, the 'undeniable provincialism of the English Puritans and Protestant Nonconformists',[23] not only paves the way for such politically and religiously involved fictions as Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72) and *Daniel Deronda* (1876); it also brings to the fore a dialectic that had been simmering under the surface of critical writing for at least a decade. In a travelogue entitled 'On the Canal' (1858), serialized in Charles Dickens's *Household Words*, John Hollingshead admits to 'a tendency [in himself] to depreciate that which I know very little about. […] I call Paris hot and dull; Brussels a provincial Paris'; instead, he finds 'wonderful stories of picturesque spots lying neglected almost under the very shadow of Saint Paul's Cathedral, and fabulous accounts of people and manners existing within a pistol-shot of Primrose Hill, or three hours' walk of Hyde Park Corner: less known to energetic travellers than the Kaffir races: more strange to cosmopolitan dandies than Aztec life.'[24] Such an implied contrast between the provincial and the cosmopolitan, undercut by the admitted strangeness of parts of the metropolis within easy reach of the metropolitan reader ('strange' even to 'cosmopolitan dandies'), is a neglected aspect of both the 'provincial' and the 'historical' novel of the mid-Victorian period.

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[21] Josephine McDonagh, 'Rethinking Provincialism in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Fiction: From *Our Village* to *Villette*', *Victorian Studies* 55:3 (Spring 2013), 399-424 (400).
[22] John Bowen, 'The Historical Novel', in *A Companion to Victorian Fiction*, edited by Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 244-259 (245).
[23] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings*, edited by Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 194-195.
[24] John Hollingshead, 'On the Canal', *Household Words*, Volume XVIII (1858), 289. http://www.djo.org.uk/household-words/volume-xviii/page-289.html (accessed January 28, 2021).

The relationship between the terms 'provincial' and 'cosmopolitan' changes at different times and in different places. Provisionally, however, I propose that the words 'cosmopolitan' and 'cosmopolite' have three substantive meanings in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century English literature between the 1860s and 1914. Firstly, and typically, they denote an ethical and political position in which citizenship of the world overrides citizenship of a locality. Secondly, they can also denote a badge of identity, sometimes positive and sometimes negative, sometimes inherited, sometimes assumed, attaching to an individual. Thirdly, they can connote a way of visualizing the world as paradoxically both small (because increasingly interconnected) and large (because increasingly visitable from any particular starting-point). These definitions, however, have never been stable, and the second is the least stable, since questions of identity are so multifarious and so subjective, dependent on an author's politics as well as his or her skill of characterization. The third of these definitions looks outwards at the world rather than back into individual psychology; the first two rest on a study of politics and psychology.

In the late nineteenth century, ideas of cosmopolitanism were often situated within the expanding metropolis, the 'visible city', as has been skilfully demonstrated by Tanya Agathocleous.[25] Yet actual depictions of the city, or *polis*, in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century English literature, far from suggesting an inherent connection between the self-conscious political centrality of the metropolis and the cosmopolitan experience, often evoke the atmosphere of a provincial, topographically haphazard small town. In Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907), London in 1887 is first described in terms of 'grimy brick houses which existed in large quantities before the [turn-of-the-century] era of reconstruction'.[26] Even a foreign embassy, the quintessential nexus of cosmopolitanism in practice, is described in uninviting terms as occupying 'a narrow street by the side of a yellow wall which, for some inscrutable reason, had No. 1 Chesham Square written on it in black letters.'[27] Conrad emphasizes this paradox when Verloc, recognizing No. 1 Chesham Square, is described as 'cosmopolitan enough not to be deceived by London's topographical mysteries'.[28] Verloc's cosmopolitanism therefore depends upon a knowledge of contingent detail rather than broad outline; 'topographical mysteries' suggests exactly the kind of contingency associated with

[25] See Tanya Agathocleous, *Urban Realism and the Cosmopolitan Imagination in the Nineteenth Century: Visible City, Invisible World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), xiv-xviii.
[26] Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent* [1907], in *The Portable Conrad*, edited with an introduction by Michael Gorra (London: Penguin, 2007), 365-603 (379).
[27] Conrad, *The Portable Conrad*, 387.
[28] Conrad, *The Portable Conrad*, 387.

the assimilation of local oddities and quirks. Indeed, London in the late nineteenth century, even the reconstructed London of the *fin-de-siècle*, has been called in all seriousness, by one of Oscar Wilde's biographers, Richard Ellmann, 'that metropolitan small town'.[29]

Cosmopolitanism also exists outside the city, in what might be called (to use an antiquated phraseology) 'the provinces', or (to use more recent critical terms) the 'periphery' as opposed to the metropolitan 'centre'. In Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* (1875), in which London is the normative geographic centre, 'there appeared in Mr Alf's paper, the *Evening Pulpit*, a very remarkable article on the South Central Pacific and Mexican railway', which 'left on the mind of its reader no impression of any decided opinion about the railway. The Editor would at any future time be able to refer to his article with pride whether the railway should become a great cosmopolitan fact, or whether it should collapse amid the foul struggles of a horde of swindlers.'[30] It is in such remote places that cosmopolitanism is most solidly manifested: ironically, the existence of the railway in central America, more than the London office from which it is proposed, makes it possible to speak 'with pride' of 'a great cosmopolitan fact'.[31] With similar irony, the '*Literary Chronicle* Office, Strand' in London is later echoed by the 'strand' at Lowestoft (a coastal town in Suffolk where part of the novel takes place), 'which has made Lowestoft what it is'.[32] 'Provincial fiction' has been defined as 'depict[ing] some version of nonmetropolitan ordinary life.'[33] Eliot's *Romola* complicates this definition by depicting Florence in the 1490s, a metropolis at the height of its power with a cosmopolitan population and trading network, as akin to a small English provincial town of the nineteenth century, primarily through the lens of the cosmopolitan but self-absorbed and historically uninterested Tito.

One of my central arguments in the thesis is that cosmopolitanism, as understood by Eliot, James, and Ibsen, needs the past. At least since Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857), the modern, cosmopolitan city in literature has been consciously identified with the present moment and the transient sensation, disregarding the past as a dead excrescence. But in the writers on whom I focus, it is a sense of the past that gives provincial lives an incipient

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[29] Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (1987; London: Vintage, 1988), 409.
[30] Anthony Trollope, *The Way We Live Now* [1875], edited with an introduction and notes by Francis O'Gorman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 225.
[31] Trollope, *The Way We Live Now*, 11.
[32] Trollope, *The Way We Live Now*, 348.
[33] Jacob Romanow, 'Provincial Fiction', in Lesa Scholl (ed.), *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Victorian Women's Writing* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan 2020). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02721-6_334-1 (accessed January 10, 2021).

sense of having no country but belonging, rather, to a citizenship of the world. In Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), for example, Isabel Archer at first distances herself from what she thinks of as an exclusive cosmopolitan world inhabited by male eccentrics: of her cousin Ralph Touchett, she says, '[h]e's what's called a cosmopolite',[34] thereby placing herself as a provincial; later, she and Gilbert Osmond 'talked of the Florentine, the Roman, the cosmopolite world' as though they were 'distinguished performers figuring for a charity.'[35] But in Rome, having 'always been fond of history', Isabel finds that 'here was history in the stones of the street and the atoms of the sunshine.'[36] She needs the past in order to partake in that cosmopolitan experience, and so better understand herself in the present and future:

> Keen as was her interest in the rugged relics of the Roman past that lay scattered about her and in which the corrosion of centuries had still left so much of individual life, her thoughts, after resting a while on these things, had wandered, by a concatenation of stages it might take some subtlety to trace, to regions and objects charged with a more active appeal. From the Roman past to Isabel's future was a long stride, but her imagination had taken it in a single flight and now hovered in slow circles over the nearer and richer field.[37]

Mrs Humphry Ward's *Robert Elsmere* (1888), though outside the scope of this study, has a title character similarly vitalized and propelled forward by the past. Full of anticipation on first visiting Oxford, Elsmere finds that 'to this thrill of vague expectation, this young sense of an expanding world, something of pathos and of sacredness was added by the dumb influences of the old streets and weather-beaten stones.'[38]

For provincial characters such as Isabel Archer and Robert Elsmere, history thus fleshes out geography. Even for characters who travel with a definite purpose, such as Conrad's Verloc, geography alone is inadequate to inculcate 'character development' in a moral or artistic sense. What is also required is a sense of history: hence Verloc listens receptively to Michaelis' radical view of 'history' as 'dominated and determined by the tool and the production—by the force of economic conditions.'[39] Without some sense of the past, either provincialism in a negative sense creeps into the character, or their cosmopolitanism becomes

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[34] Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* [1881], edited with an introduction and notes by Nicola Bradbury (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 104.
[35] James, *Portrait*, 271.
[36] James, *Portrait*, 312.
[37] James, *Portrait*, 313.
[38] Mrs Humphry [Mary Augusta] Ward, *Robert Elsmere* [1888], edited with an introduction by Rosemary Ashton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 50.
[39] Conrad, *The Portable Conrad*, 407.

stale and jaded, inadequate to meet the demands of the moral choices they face and, from the reader's point of view, artistically inconsistent with the capaciousness and depth of the novel form.

Helen Small reminds us of 'nineteenth-century cosmopolitanism's antithetical relation to patriotism',[40] but in another sense, nineteenth-century cosmopolitanism is complicated by a realist drive to write about 'provincialism' and 'provincial life'; it is a provincialism seemingly antithetical to cosmopolitanism and the 'cosmopolite' character but actually dependent on it. George Eliot is the key figure in exploring this offshoot of the 'cosmopolitan-patriot' antithesis: she shows how cosmopolitanism can exist in provincial surroundings, animating provincial characters; she also shows, conversely, how a superficially cosmopolitan culture from the past, Renaissance Florence (explored in *Romola*) can be seen in the same light as superficially provincial settings such as the rural English Midlands of her better-known novels. Writing as a polemical cultural critic in *Culture and Anarchy,* Matthew Arnold is chiefly concerned with groups, particularly religious groups; his contemporary George Eliot, being a novelist, is more concerned with individuals. Yet given weight by Arnold's enormous influence, Eliot's concerns by the 1870s become explicitly rather than implicitly international; they are prefigured, however, in her 1860s writings, in which cosmopolitanism is implicitly contrasted not only with the national, but also with the provincial.[41]

In Chapters 1 and 2, I show how this aspect of Eliot's work, which I call her 'provincial cosmopolitanism', provides an ideal focus through which to read Eliot's often neglected but central novel, *Romola,* which she tellingly called her 'historical romance […] different in character'.[42] In *Romola,* Eliot intervenes in the construction of the historical novel by subtly parodying the Hegelian view of history that she later endorses, narratologically and characterologically, in *Daniel Deronda* (1876). As I hope to show, however, she also needs the temporal distance afforded by her chosen setting, Renaissance Florence, in order to show how cosmopolitanism can operate in a superficially cosmopolitan but provincialized (and, in the course of her novel, besieged) city.

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[40] Small, 'George Eliot and the Cosmopolitan Cynic', 86.
[41] Tanya Agathocleous explores the equation of metropolitan with cosmopolitan in *Urban Realism and the Cosmopolitan Imagination in the Nineteenth Century: Visible City, Invisible World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
[42] Quoted in J. W. Cross (ed.), *George Eliot's Life as Related in Her Letters and Journals*, 3 volumes (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons), ii.229.

In his recent critical biography of Eliot, Philip Davis observes that 'the individual [in *Romola*] apprehends the need for a universal order that transcends the corrupt social one but remains nonetheless in clouded darkness. It is like a momentary vertical dimension even while the horizontal work of time goes on.'[43] Davis means by this that 'real', quotidian time, for Eliot's characters, needs a transcendental counterbalance in order for Eliot's characters to find meaning to their lives. But I argue that, in another sense, the 'universal order', the 'vertical dimension' sought by individual characters in *Romola*, is not something spiritual or transcendental: what is needed is 'deep', historical time as a vertical counterbalance to the horizontal socio-geographical plane across which the characters move. In other words, history itself transcends the corrupt contemporary socio-geographical order. The vertical, rather than the horizontal, dimension of history, however clouded the past might seem to be in the mists of time, counterbalances the horizontal plane of society and geography, which are seen in *Romola* to be corrupt and conquerable. In Chapter 1, I argue that history is thus needed to flesh out geography: I interpret Davis's vertical-horizontal paradigm as a problem that Eliot seeks to resolve by embedding it within the main body of her novel, *Romola*, and by framing this main body with a 'Proem' that is at once speculative about history's function as a counterbalance to geography, and performative of that function by taking a 'long view' of the world of the novel.

In Chapter 2, I turn to the main, 'down-to-earth' narrative in *Romola*. I show how Eliot uses her characterization of Tito and Savonarola (the former a wholly fictional, morally dubious, accidental 'cosmopolite', the latter a religious reformer with an implicitly cosmopolitan purpose, modelled on and sometimes directly overlapping with the historical Girolamo Savonarola), and the linguistic and narratological device of bathos, as ways of solving the problem of how to impose a universal, transcendent, historical order on the apparent arbitrariness of the novel's socio-geographical canvas. 1490s Florence was a setting newly familiar, in the 1860s, to educated readers in England and America, but at the same time it was a locale not yet sufficiently fictionalized to reveal its abundant cultural contradictions, a gap Eliot carefully exploits in *Romola*. Eliot also uses her characterization of Tito and Savonarola, and the device of bathos, to bring cosmopolitan culture back down to earth, as it were. At the levels of character, plot, and text, Eliot experimentally rejects the prototypical

[43] Philip Davis, *The Transferred Life of George Eliot: The Biography of a Novelist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 296.

cosmopolitan paradigm of aloof cynical detachment in favour of a new paradigm that keeps it in touch with the provincial and the mundane.

Of the three writers with whom I am concerned, only James was stereotyped as a cosmopolitan writer in his own lifetime, a view of the writer as effetely detached that maintains the force of disapproval to this day. James, an admirer of Eliot in general and *Romola* in particular, has frequently been read as 'cosmopolitan' in the various senses attributable to the word.[44] Throughout James's career critics drew attention to James's perceived cosmopolitanism, finding it to be a defect of his characters and implicitly a shortcoming of their author. In 1889, one critic complained, 'we should like to hear some Billingsgate [dialect] for variety. These people [James's characters] clearly have the most cosmopolitan minds, and are a walking rebuke to our insularity; but […] we actually find ourselves guilty of inattention'.[45] James implicitly answers this criticism in *The Tragic Muse* (1890), a Zolaesque novel of London life which his brother William in a letter praised as 'answer[ing] the accusation that you could do nothing but the international and cosmopolitan business'.[46] In a short story of 1892, James's friend, Vernon Lee, describes a character ambiguously as 'a cosmopolitan American […] an inmate of the world of Henry James', implying that James's fictional 'world' (a *cosmos* of its own) resembles a prison (housing 'inmates') more than a pleasure-ground, whether its ostensible setting is the Grand Canal (*The Wings of the Dove*) or Millbank Prison (*The Tragic Muse*).[47]

In the early twentieth century, with the publication of James's selective and self-critical *New York Edition* (1907-9), James's reputation came to be built retrospectively, but his categorization as a 'cosmopolitan' writer still constituted the hinge on which his reputation turned. Oliver Elton, one of the first academic critics of James, drew attention to James's perceived cosmopolitanism specifically in order to disavow it, claiming in 1907 (some years before James became naturalized as a British subject) that James 'is not a cosmopolitan, even yet; he never was one. He is better; he understands other countries, but does not adopt them'.[48] Complicating this either-or paradigm, M. Sterge Groton in 1912 claimed that '[f]rom

[44] Jessica Berman, 'Cosmopolitanism', in *Henry James in Context*, edited by David McWhirter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 138-149, argues that 'the versions of cosmopolitanism James presents […] represent a complex response to the possibilities and limitations of cosmopolitanism at the turn of the twentieth century' (138). But James's reputation as a 'cosmopolitan' writer predates the *fin-de-siècle.*
[45] Quoted in Roger Gard (ed.), *Henry James: The Critical Heritage* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 191.
[46] Quoted in Gard (ed.), *Henry James: The Critical Heritage*, 193.
[47] Quoted in Gard (ed.), *Henry James: The Critical Heritage*, 240.
[48] Oliver Elton, *Modern Studies* (London: Edward Arnold, 1907), 246.

1890 or thereabouts [*The Tragic Muse* onwards], Mr. James has abandoned this specialised interest [in writing about Americans in Europe], this particular angle, for a cosmopolitan temper.'[49] The 'cosmopolitan temper' of James's later fiction is better seen, however, as a new degree of complexity in his treatment of character in relation to cosmopolitanism.

What in Chapter 3 I call the 'cosmopolitan dilemma' in James's writings consists of the problematic search for a way of life that is neither too conformist nor too isolated. The major contribution of the 'cosmopolite' to human relations, as James sees it, is the attempt to see the world as a whole from both within and without different perspectives, an attempt to be both insider (*politês*) and outsider (existing outside of the *polis*, in the wider *cosmos*) at once. This is what makes the 'cosmopolite' character ethically important to James; it redeems him or her from the negative charges so often levelled against 'cosmopolitans', namely that they are overprivileged posers and chancers, that they are superficial and lacking in moral integrity, and that their lives are characterized by an absence of roots and allegiances.

The person most likely to have to face this 'cosmopolitan dilemma' is a recurring archetype in James's fiction, an archetype I identify as the 'accidental' or 'naïve' 'cosmopolite'. Going against the Jamesian stereotype, this character is the person who is not consciously born cosmopolite, like Shakespeare's Richard II; nor does he or she achieve it, like Henry IV. Rather, like Henry V, these characters have cosmopolitanism thrust upon them, and can, if they so choose, put it to some moral purpose: typically, the expansion of their own moral compass, and the justification of their own apparently arbitrary purpose in life, by an augmentation of their sense of the past. In Chapter 3, I show how in a celebrated novel of James's 'middle years', *What Maisie Knew*, history and the 'historic imagination' most readily inform the making of an accidental 'cosmopolite', the pre-adolescent heroine, Maisie. In Chapter 4, I show how two novels of James's 'late phase', *The Wings of the Dove*, and the incomplete *The Sense of the Past*, depict characters who are similarly redeemed, as 'cosmopolites', by the incipient allure of the past, even if the past is seen simultaneously as present and absent, living and dead. Building on Eliot's experiment in *Romola*, James shows how a 'historic sense' or 'sense of the past', historical depth as well as geographical breadth, offers his protagonists the best means of bridging the conspicuous gap between the universal and the particular (the *cosmos* and the *polis*), and so come to some resolution of the cosmopolitan dilemma.

[49] Quoted in Gard (ed.), *Henry James: The Critical Heritage*, 505.

It is also a sense of the past which welds together the provincial and the cosmopolitan in James's fiction, showing that a cosmopolitan lifestyle, ethic, or world-view need not depend on literally traversing the globe. As James wrote admiringly of Anthony Trollope, 'the emotions of a nursery-governess in Australia would take precedence of [*sic*] the adventures of a depraved *femme du monde* in Paris or London.'[50] This is closer to James's own order of precedence than is generally assumed. Unlike Gustave Flaubert or Émile Zola, Trollope for James 'is so occasional, so accidental, so full of the echoes of voices that are not the voice of the muse.'[51] Again, this is unconsciously autobiographical of James, whose own cosmopolitanism, like Trollope's, is unself-conscious and empathetic rather than self-conscious and pedantic; his fiction consists of the accidental and the occasional, preconditions of the 'cosmopolite' experience as James conceived it prior to the 1890s.

Following my analysis of Eliot's and James's experiments with 'provincial cosmopolitanism' in the novel, I turn in chapters 5 and 6 to the dramas of Henrik Ibsen, read in William Archer's original 1890s English translations, which, I argue, reveal a similarly subdued but powerfully 'provincial' cosmopolitanism on both an aesthetic and an ethical level. Ibsen, for James and other contemporary Anglophone critics, is both a provincial Norwegian and a disguised cosmopolitan writer. While Narve Fulsås and Tore Rem have pointed to James's 'recurring source of puzzlement' at Ibsen's apparent provincialism, and his sense that Ibsen's 'greatness' lay in a 'peculiar tension' between a taut, highly wrought form and a thin, seemingly limited content, their claim does not systematically interrogate James's understanding of Ibsen or the relationship between James's readings and Archer's translations.[52] I argue that 'the joy of life' (*livsglæde*, or 'life-gladness'), a *cliché* picked up by James and others in English, is a symbol in Ibsen's plays of the world citizenship towards which his 'provincial' characters, sometimes unwittingly, aspire.

I also argue that Ibsen's early poetic drama *Peer Gynt*, which I study in Archer's 1892 translation (a translation assisted by his brother Charles), dramatizes two versions of cosmopolitanism, idealist and pragmatic, with Gynt as a historian-cosmopolite figure; and that *Emperor and Galilean* (1873), Ibsen's two-part 'world-historic' closet drama, depicts in its first half an idealist cosmopolitanism in the character of Julian the Apostate, and in its

[50] Henry James, *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*, edited by Leon Edel and Mark Wilson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1347.
[51] James, *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*, 1347.
[52] Narve Fulsås and Tore Rem, *Ibsen, Scandinavia and the Making of a World Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 238-239.

second deconstructs that cosmopolitan ideal. I suggest that Julian's frequent references to Diogenes, the original 'citizen of the world', gesture towards secular cosmopolitanism as well as towards the pre-Christian religious paganism he ostensibly seeks to revive. In studying Archer's *Peer Gynt*, I seek to demonstrate the range of thematic associations possible in a poetic translation of a play in which, Archer himself counsels the reader, 'the sheer interest, the pure poetry' is intended to 'carry' the reader beyond any 'obscurities' of locally Norwegian resonances and associations.[53] Archer quotes an early critic of Ibsen, P. H. Wicksteed, who predicts that 'the universal problems with which the poem deals, […] will retain their awful interest when Ibsen's polemic against his countrymen [a dubiously superficial reading of the play] has sunk into oblivion.'[54]

My concern in Chapters 5 and 6 is with the 'English' Ibsen seen not as Anglicized but as cosmopolitanized by Anglophone critics in the quarter-century between 1889 and 1914. Ibsen's plays (as translated by Archer), and their effects, made James, Ibsen's shrewdest critic in English, reimagine his own cosmopolitan identity from the 1890s onwards. James's criticism, uniquely finding Ibsen to combine cosmopolitanism and provincialism, naturalism and symbolism, morally alert anti-idealism and aesthetic formalism, is designed to make readers of Archer's and subsequent English translations see Ibsen's plays, from *The Pillars of Society* to *When We Dead Awaken*, as extraordinarily multivalent. Ibsen's canonization in the English-speaking world between 1900 and 1914 must be understood, I argue in Chapter 6, in the context of a more politically polarized understanding of cosmopolitanism, in which hopes and fears for the future have become rooted in an awareness of international, border-fluctuating history. Central to this phase are three texts: the second, revised edition of George Bernard Shaw's *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1913); Archer's late essays on Ibsen (1906-1919) taken as a whole; and Archer's anonymously published polemic, *The Great Analysis: A Plea for a Rational World-Order* (1912), whose philosophy of purposely provincialized cosmopolitanism makes explicit, in non-fictional form, the 'provincial cosmopolitanism' of Ibsen's drama. The latter text, long out of print, has been entirely neglected in relation to Archer's Ibsen, and its provenance ignored. I show for the first time how this text must be read in conjunction with, and as arising from, Archer's understanding of Ibsen. Ibsen himself, I argue, moves towards an anti-idealist, pragmatic cosmopolitanism even as he permits many

[53] Henrik Ibsen, *Peer Gynt: A Dramatic Poem*, authorised translation by William and Charles Archer (London: Walter Scott, 1892), ix.
[54] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt*, ix.

of his characters, beginning with the Emperor Julian in *Emperor and Galilean*, to retain a remnant of idealist cosmopolitanism in order to give their lives meaning.

My overarching claim is that historical consciousness welds together the two aspects of 'provincial cosmopolitanism', the 'provincial' and the 'cosmopolitan'. This explains the historical novel form employed by Eliot in *Romola*, not only because it tests the reader's willingness to engage with a past era, but also because *Romola*'s chief characters are all defined by the degrees and modes of openness to a sense of the past; it explains the importance of historical consciousness in James's contemporary novels; and it explains, finally, the preoccupations with the function of the historian-cosmopolite, with 'world-history', and with the repercussions of personal and family history in Archer's translations of Ibsen's dramas. In *Romola*, tragicomic bathos offers a means of bringing a detached version of cosmopolitanism down to earth, and gives Eliot the means by which the historical novel becomes a vehicle for a provincial cosmopolitanism that subtly repudiates the lofty detachment of a Hegelian view of history (a Hegelianism she will later endorse, to very different effect, in *Daniel Deronda*). Eliot's 'provincial cosmopolitanism', to which I shall now turn, is at once the bedrock of her experiment with historical fiction in *Romola*, her solution to the cosmopolitan dilemma posed by previous nineteenth-century literature, and the precursor of James's fictional experiments in his novels of contemporary life.

Chapter 1: George Eliot and provincial cosmopolitanism

i. Towards a provincial cosmopolitanism in George Eliot

This chapter engages with what I call Eliot's 'provincial cosmopolitanism', and considers how, in *Romola*, the representation of an imagined, but in many respects historically verifiable, past – Florence in the 1490s – must come to terms with the reality of the narrator's situation in the present. In other words, I consider how the 'cosmopolitanism' of the multi-perspective, multi-faceted past is inevitably bound by the 'provincialism' of the author-narrator's subjectivity. I hope to show how even a superficially cosmopolitan culture like Renaissance Florence has claims to represent 'provincial life' along the same narrative and characterological lines as the English Midlands of, for example, *The Mill on the Floss*. I also argue that for the cosmopolitan character in Eliot's fiction, a sense of the past (the apprehended past within the historical present of the historical novel) is essential to buttressing the lack of ethical moorings resultant from self-serving travel, commerce, and presentist or futurist self-interest. It is no coincidence that Eliot must turn, in *Romola*, to the age of Machiavelli in order to show the moral bankruptcy of the Machiavellian (self-interested, ahistorical, unscrupulously detached) type of cosmopolite character. I argue that *Romola*, the centre-point of Eliot's fiction, both anticipates and differs from *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* in its presentation of a provincial cosmopolitanism that is at once dependent upon a particular view of a particular time and place, and exterior to the presuppositions of that setting. Genealogically, *Romola* is central to Eliot's thinking about cosmopolitanism; formally, it is a history about competing kinds of history and anti-history.

Prior to *Romola*, references to the 'cosmopolite' in Anglo-American prose fiction were scarce and suggestive of the word's derogatory connotations implicit in Washington Irving's revival of the term. Nathaniel Hawthorne's tale, 'The Prophetic Pictures' (1837), has one character describe another, a budding artist, as 'a polished gentleman—a citizen of the world—yes, a true cosmopolite',[1] as though 'cosmopolite', following Irving's depreciative usage in *A History of New York*, were too barbed a word, in speech and in writing, to be used too casually. 'Cosmopolite' and 'cosmopolitan' are words notably absent from *Romola*, but they informed debate about the novel immediately after Eliot's death. One anonymous reviewer of J. W. Cross's 1885 biography of Eliot, reviewing the scope of her writing career, noted that in

[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Tales and Sketches*, edited by Roy Harvey Pearce (New York: Library of America, 1996), 456.

Romola Eliot had deliberately portrayed the 'more cosmopolitan culture' of Renaissance Florence (more 'cosmopolitan', presumably, than 'provincial' England).[2] How the portrayal of that 'more cosmopolitan culture' relates to Eliot's view of history, however, went unexamined by the reviewer, and has remained largely unexamined ever since.

This omission in the critical writing on *Romola*, despite the novel's concern with an ostensibly cosmopolitan culture, may partly be explained by an interpretation, or misinterpretation, of Eliot's cosmopolitanism on the basis of her other, more overtly political works. Nancy Henry, for example, claims that '[t]o George Eliot, cosmopolitanism was a condition from which Jews, along with many Englishmen, suffered.'[3] But this is to misread *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879), Eliot's last and *sui generis* work, as a direct reflection of the author's opinions. It is surely more accurate to say that it is Theophrastus, a created fictional character who in any case produces 'impressions' rather than 'maxims' or 'aphorisms', who takes this view rather than Eliot, and that even then, he does so provisionally and hesitatingly:

> If they [the Jews] drop that separateness which is made their reproach, they *may* [my emphasis] be in danger of lapsing into a cosmopolitan indifference that is the equivalent of cynicism, and of missing that identification with the nationality immediately around them which *might* [my emphasis] make some amends for their inherited privation.[4]

An irony here is that Theophrastus is himself distinctly cosmopolitan in one sense, being profoundly interested, as the various essays show, in synthesizing different cultures and nations. But he is also cynical, in Diogenes-like fashion, about cosmopolitanism itself: he equates cosmopolitanism with 'indifference' and 'cynicism'. This cynicism has been seen as important to Eliot's thinking: Helen Small argues that 'the cynicism of *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879) is fully embraced [by Eliot], stylistically and (by way of experiment) ethically.'[5] 'By way of experiment' is a crucial caveat: *Impressions* is an ethical exercise rather than a final statement of philosophical values.

Eliot in *Impressions*, I suggest, is building on her earlier, artistic experiment in *Romola* where she seeks to integrate the stylistic and ethical possibility of a 'provincial cosmopolitanism'

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[2] Quoted in David Carroll (ed.), *George Eliot: The Critical Heritage* (1971; London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 200.
[3] Nancy Henry, 'George Eliot and politics', in *The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot*, edited by George Levine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 138-158 (156).
[4] George Eliot, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* [1879], edited by Nancy Henry (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994), 156.
[5] Small, 'George Eliot and the Cosmopolitan Cynic', 89, 97.

within the form of the historical novel. In *Impressions*, Theophrastus recognizes that to be a citizen of the world is also to be a denizen of history:

> Except on the ground of a primitive golden age and continuous degeneracy, I see no rational footing for scorning the whole present population of the globe, unless I scorn every previous generation from whom they have inherited their diseases of mind and body, and by consequence scorn my own scorn, which is equally an inheritance of this universally contemptible life, and so on—scorning to infinity.[6]

History – the past, after all, whose events have produced the geographical-cultural borders of the present – is an unavoidable aspect, Theophrastus hints, of world citizenship.

The shadowy character of Theophrastus, and his awareness that history is every bit as consequential as present-day geography, is prefigured in the 'Proem' with which *Romola* begins. In the 'Proem', Eliot has the 'spirit of a Florentine citizen' revisit the Florence of Eliot's own day, firstly from afar and then at close quarters.[7] In so doing, Eliot subtly parodies the Hegelian view of history as the inevitable and insuperable progress of a 'World-Spirit' that 'rises above all special [individual] claims',[8] and reacts against a prevalent understanding of cosmopolitanism, modelled on Hegelian historiography, as something necessarily detached and transcendent, even ahistorical in its preference for grand outline over local detail. The 'Proem' is itself a form taken from poetry, a portal into the novel, in which irony takes the place of sincerity, and the spirit must come down to earth in order to apprehend its own historical position. In *Romola*, Eliot ironizes the historical novel for the first time.

In *Romola*, Eliot is intervening in the historical novel in four ways: through the novelty of her fictionalized setting (Renaissance Florence); through the particular kinds of character introduced (the self-interested Tito, the naïve and later saintly Romola, the iconoclastic Savonarola); through her narrative method (the framing device of the 'Proem', the narrative

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[6] Eliot, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, 17.

[7] George Eliot, *Romola*, edited by Andrew Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) (The Clarendon Edition of the Novels of George Eliot), 4. All references in this thesis to the text of *Romola* are to the Clarendon Edition. I also follow the Clarendon Edition in quoting from Eliot's other novels (in the case of *Middlemarch*, I use a reprint of the Clarendon Edition under the Oxford World's Classics imprint; in the case of *Silas Marner*, I use the Oxford World's Classics second edition in lieu of the unpublished Clarendon Edition). Andrew Brown's Clarendon Edition of *Romola* uses as its copy text the 1862-63 *Cornhill Magazine* serialization of the novel, the first of four 'settings' of *Romola* over which George Eliot had some authorial control (the others being the three-volume 1863 first edition, the 1865 Illustrated edition, and the 1877-78 Cabinet edition). See Eliot, *Romola*, lx-lxi. Despite minor emendations, Eliot did not substantially revise *Romola* during her lifetime, and as such there is no obvious conflict between early and later editions as there is in the case of Henry James's novels (on my choice of James texts, see Chapter 3).

[8] G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, translated by John Sibree (New York: Cosimo, 2007), 37.

ellipses, the specificity of the ending); and through the literary device of bathos (the leavening agent of character conflict and the symbolic means of bringing the loftier claims of cosmopolitanism down to earth). Bathos in *Romola* makes the historical novel lose its pretentious and aggrandizing edge; its insistence that world-historical views must be subsumed into the particular and the comical, foreshadows both the comedy of *Middlemarch* and the particularism of *Daniel Deronda*.

In the course of *Romola*, Tito and Savonarola, far more than the eponymous heroine, are case studies in how to misuse the power of cosmopolitanism that the spirit of the 'Proem' represents. Even Tito's name is conspicuously ordinary; the Florentines who first meet him are surprised that it is not more grandiose:

> 'Truly?' said Bernardo, rather scornfully, as he took a seat, 'I had expected it to be at least as long as the names of a city, a river, a province, and an empire all put together. We Florentines mostly use our names as we do prawns, and strip them of all flourishes before we trust them to our throats.'[9]

Tito confounds his hosts' expectations, and the conjunction of 'city', 'river', 'province', and 'empire' suggests the contrast between everyday reality and the futility of imperial aspiration. Tito's cosmopolitanism, as will be seen in the next chapter, is subtler than his name suggests. Eliot is concerned with those aspects of the cosmopolite character that lie beneath the surface.

Henry James, early in his career, considered that '[b]eing a cosmopolite is an accident, but one must make the best of it.'[10] Tito, an entirely imaginary character, is a cosmopolite by accident: someone who conspicuously does not, as James urges, 'make the best of it'. His relentless focus on the present betrays his obligations to others and to the place (Florence) which has offered him hospitality. Savonarola, Eliot's imaginary representation of a famous historical figure, is unhealthily preoccupied with an awaited future; too narrowly convinced of his own divine inspiration, he ignores the necessary claims of history and tradition in morally validating his own peripatetic existence. Both Tito and Savonarola reject the traditions which bind together the superficially worldly but also enclosed and 'provincial' society around them. Eliot's intervention in the historical novel is therefore to internalize cosmopolitanism, making it an aspect of character as well as setting, and so reconciling it as an abstract idea with the solidity of moral drama.

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[9] Eliot, *Romola*, 72-73.
[10] Henry James, *Collected Travel Writings: The Continent*, edited by Richard Howard (New York: Library of America, 1993), 721.

Before examining these claims in detail through close reading, I firstly consider Eliot's intervention in the genre of the historical novel and how far she moves beyond the claims for the value of the historical novel made by some of her predecessors. I then study the 'Proem', in which Eliot subtly parodies the Hegelian view of history, introducing her dual vision of distance and closeness; she also, in the 'Proem', outlines the themes of the novel, emphasizing her vision of Florence in terms of the notion of world citizenship. Thirdly, I consider cosmopolitanism in *Romola* through the key characters of Tito and Savonarola, whose spurious cosmopolitanism and anti-historicism, respectively, undermine their characters in an ethical sense. Throughout, my concern is with Eliot's use of bathos as a leavening agent and also a levelling agent with which to dramatize cosmopolitanism as it exists in one of the provincial corners of history, an imagined place where two versions of cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitan cynicism and idealist cosmopolitanism, exist separately and uneasily in the characters of Tito (cosmopolitan cynicism) and Savonarola (idealist cosmopolitanism). In narratological terms, Eliot experimentally rejects cynical detachment in favour of a paradigm of cosmopolitanism that keeps it in touch with the provincial and the mundane: despite the grandiosity of Florence in its Renaissance pomp, and the cosmopolitanism of its inhabitants and its trading network, Eliot makes the inward-looking provincialism of its inhabitants, when they are threatened by outside forces, the city's distinguishing feature.

Middlemarch, *Daniel Deronda*, and more recently 'The Lifted Veil' (1859) and *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, are the texts to which all recent in-depth considerations of Eliot and cosmopolitanism have restricted themselves.[11] Amanda Anderson, who omits *Romola* from her study of Eliot's cosmopolitanism, finds 'one of the most rigorous and complicated contributions to the Victorian literature of detachment' in 'George Eliot's last completed novel, *Daniel Deronda*.'[12] Anderson distinguishes between Eliot's presentation of 'modern cosmopolitan life' and her 'complicated cosmopolitan ideal [as advocated in *Deronda*] that promotes critical detachment not only as a means to self-fulfilment but also as the basis for an ever-expanding horizon of ethical and political engagement.'[13] Helen Small, building on Anderson's reading of Eliot, proposes that 'if Eliot was verging on prescriptive cosmopolitan idealism by the mid-1870s, she had reached that point by starting out from cynicism, or

[11] See Small, 'George Eliot and the Cosmopolitan Cynic'; see also Bruce Robbins, 'The Cosmopolitan Eliot', in *A Companion to George Eliot*, edited by Amanda Anderson and Harry E. Shaw (2013; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 400-412.
[12] Anderson, *The Powers of Distance*, 119.
[13] Anderson, *The Powers of Distance*, 119.

something very close to cynicism' in the 1850s.[14] Bridging the gap between Eliot's early, Diogenes-like cynicism (later parodied in *Impressions*) and her late, Hegelian idealism expounded in *Deronda,* in this and the following chapter I focus on the 1860s and Eliot's middle, often neglected novel, *Romola,* which as we have seen she preferred to call a 'historical romance'. *Romola*, I argue, is a way of approaching and revaluating Eliot's overall career. In putting provincial cosmopolitanism at its heart, one can revaluate her narratology and characterology in terms that combine her well-known, self-proclaimed study of 'provincial life' with a cosmopolitanism that is less cynical, less detached and less historiographically monolithic than one gleans by reading only 'The Lifted Veil', *Deronda,* and *Impressions*.

While retaining Anderson's view of *Daniel Deronda* as presenting both 'modern cosmopolitan life' and 'a complicated cosmopolitan ideal', and while taking Small's view of Eliot's early cynicism in 'The Lifted Veil' as read, I show in this chapter how Eliot's cosmopolitanism is not confined either to the early work and quasi-cynicism or to *Deronda* and the promotion of 'critical detachment' in the service of 'ethical and political engagement'. Rather, it suffuses her fiction and non-fiction to the degree that it can be seen in conjunction with, rather than chafing against, her self-presentation as a student of 'provincial life' and a champion of obscure, out-of-the-way lives. It encompasses the down-to-earth as well as the detached, the pragmatic as well as the idealistic, the social as well as the ethical and political, and, in *Romola,* crucially, the historical as well as the modern.

Eliot's writings, ranging across time and place, dramatize a complex world in which literature moves beyond nationalistic concerns and finds interest in other places and times and in their common humanity. She does so for the sake of the inherent interest of these other places and times as well as for the sake of what, in her essay 'The Natural History of German Life' (1856), she famously calls '[t]he greatest benefit we owe to the artist […] the extension of our sympathies.'[15] But this much-quoted artistic credo is too simplistic to apply to Eliot's view of cosmopolitanism, considering Eliot's deliberate dramatization in *Romola* of a remote and inaccessible time and place: how can we extend our sympathies, she seems provocatively to ask herself and the reader in *Romola,* with such insuperable barriers of time, place, culture, and language? Even Eliot's famous didacticism, which is by no means absent from *Romola,*

[14] Small, 'George Eliot and the Cosmopolitan Cynic', 89.
[15] George Eliot, *Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings*, edited by A. S. Byatt and Nicholas Warren, with an introduction by A. S. Byatt (London: Penguin, 1990), 110.

cannot answer these questions directly within the novel, since the historical novel is itself bound by these barriers. But in a wider sense, the historical novel provides a possible answer: as a form, it is the most capacious literary medium for conveying the past in all its contingent detail.

Whereas it is true that throughout her career as essayist and writer of fiction, Eliot was ambivalent about the virtues of cosmopolitanism as a political, personal, and aesthetic view of the world, her characterization is relatively consistent in its presentation of the cosmopolitan claims made on behalf of intellectually curious provincial characters. In their inner lives, many of Eliot's fictional characters are defined not so much by provincial narrow-mindedness, which is the exception rather than the norm in her characterization of provincial life, as by a yearning, dimly visionary cosmopolitanism. If there were no such yearning and no such vision, there would in many cases be no moral drama: classic instances include Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), with her 'triple world of Reality, Books, and Waking Dreams';[16] Tertius Lydgate in *Middlemarch*, who 'carried to his studies in London, Edinburgh, and Paris, the conviction that the medical profession as it might be was the finest in the world';[17] and Deronda in *Daniel Deronda*, with his 'fervour which made him easily find poetry and romance among the events of everyday life'.[18] These three idealistic protagonists, as one might expect, need such visionary attitudes in order to develop as characters and so give Eliot her philosophical *raison d'être* as a novelist. But Maggie, Lydgate, and Deronda are not the only characters in Eliot's work who can be seen, either positively or negatively, in terms of cosmopolitanism.

Harold Transome, the prospective member of Parliament in *Felix Holt* (1866), is described with ironic negative emphasis as 'neither the dissolute cosmopolitan so vigorously sketched by the Tory *Herald*, nor the intellectual giant and moral lobster suggested by the liberal imagination of the *Watchman*.'[19] The word 'dissolute' attached to 'cosmopolitan' recalls Lord Byron's intellectual cynicism attached to a hedonistic lifestyle (although Eliot could note even of Byron that his 'unhappy career was ennobled and purified towards its close by a

[16] George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* [1860], edited by Gordon S. Haight (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980) (The Clarendon Edition of the Novels of George Eliot), 241.
[17] George Eliot, *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life* [1871-72], edited with notes by David Carroll and with an introduction by David Russell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 136.
[18] George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* [1876], edited by Graham Handley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984) (The Clarendon Edition of the Novels of George Eliot), 189.
[19] George Eliot, *Felix Holt, the Radical* [1866], edited by Fred C. Thompson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980) (The Clarendon Edition of the Novels of George Eliot), 97.

high and sympathetic purpose, by honest and energetic efforts for his fellow-men'[20]). Yet, by implication, the 'liberal imagination of the *Watchman*' is unfazed by whatever qualities or circumstances – and these are unexplored – have led to the perception, on the other side of the political fence, of Transome as a 'dissolute cosmopolitan'. Lifestyle is distinguished from intellect: Herr Klesmer, a minor character in *Deronda*, rather than be defined (even negatively) as a cosmopolitan, is instead merely credited with 'cosmopolitan ideas'.[21] It is significant and tantalizing, however, that Eliot does not choose to enlarge on what Herr Klesmer's 'cosmopolitan ideas' actually are, except for the suggestion imputed by another character that 'he looks forward to a fusion of races'.[22] This both assumes the reader's intelligence in imagining what it might mean, and teases the reader who, unusually in Eliot's work, is left unenlightened.

A similarly tantalizing allusion-cum-elision occurs in Eliot's celebrated 'study of provincial life', *Middlemarch*. The nominally reformist but actually conservative country squire, Mr Brooke, has an awkward interview with his neighbour, Mrs Cadwallader. The latter is worried that Brooke's Whig sympathies will annoy his Tory neighbour, Sir James Chettam, whom she thinks is engaged to Brooke's daughter, Dorothea (unbeknownst to Mrs Cadwallader, Dorothea is now engaged to the clergyman, Mr Casaubon). This gives Brooke pause for thought:

> Mr Brooke again winced inwardly, for Dorothea's engagement had no sooner been decided, than he had thought of Mrs Cadwallader's prospective taunts. It might have been easy for ignorant observers to say, 'Quarrel with Mrs Cadwallader;' but where is a country gentleman to go who quarrels with his oldest neighbours? Who could taste the fine flavour in the name of Brooke if it were delivered casually, like wine without a seal? Certainly a man can only be cosmopolitan up to a certain point.[23]

To be 'cosmopolitan up to a certain point' is to note the limits of its practicality: for Mr Brooke, it is a potent idea if not a practical one. Cosmopolitanism therefore exists as a particularly urgent, sometimes disconcerting, privately formulated idea in the very places where views are most parochial (as Mr Brooke reminds Mrs Cadwallader, 'there is no part of the county where opinion is narrower than here'[24]). Even if it is disowned or downplayed, as it is, comically, by Mr Brooke, its allure exists most powerfully in strange out-of-the-way

[20] Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 47.
[21] Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 224.
[22] Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 224.
[23] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 50.
[24] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 50.

places, and its power as a *possible* force remains undiminished. Its workings therefore determine not only the external events of the novel, but also, more significantly, the private motivations behind them. By the 1870s, Eliot was conscious that cosmopolitanism does not begin where provincialism ends; rather, it carries provincialism with it. F. R. Leavis argued that 'it is [Eliot's] greatness that she retains all the provincial strength and virtue while escaping, as no other Victorian novelist does, the limitations of provinciality.'[25] '[T]he provincial strength and virtue', I argue, are put to great use by Eliot in order to escape provincial limitations, as Leavis comprehends; but those limitations, I add, are themselves no barrier in Eliot's work to the presentation of a cosmopolitan ideal, view of the world, or mode of life.

How convincing Eliot's characters are for the reader partly depends, then, upon the evocation in each novel of a provincial world-within-world – a geographically circumscribed region within the wider world of the idealistic imagination, with its own hidden depths, fields of vision, prejudices, and blind spots, against which the characters typically chafe. Such a world-within-world is a feature of all Eliot's novels. But its necessity in her fictional scheme is something that she had first to spell out. If Eliot's characters are often what Terry Eagleton calls 'pedestrian types', nevertheless, he adds, 'they are candidates for one's compassion',[26] and for many of them one aspect of their candidacy for our compassion is a view of the world that is incipiently cosmopolitan. At stake in Eliot's fiction is a vision of 'the world' as not only determined by 'insignificant people', but also influenced by the cosmopolitanism implicit in their characterization: the sense of the world dormant in her characters, as well as our sense of her characters operating in the world. In *Impressions*, the eponymous narrator, observing the contemporary world, claims that '[t]he time is not yet come for cosmopolitanism to be highly virtuous, any more than for communism to suffice for social energy.'[27] But Eliot's fiction, even where the word is lacking, shows that cosmopolitanism need not be 'highly virtuous' in order to engage the minds and determine the actions of ordinary and extraordinary people.

The narrator of *Felix Holt* (to take an early and representative example of Eliot's interest in extending her readers' sympathies), contrasting trains unfavourably with the stagecoaches that preceded them as the fastest means of long-distance travel in England, declares that 'the

[25] Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, 121-122.
[26] Terry Eagleton, *Humour* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019), 48.
[27] Eliot, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, 147.

happy outside passenger seated on the box [of a stagecoach] from the dawn to the gloaming gathered enough stories of English life, enough of English labours in town and country, enough aspects of earth and sky, to make a modern Odyssey.'[28] The implication is that the narrator will go on to describe something like the Homeric Odyssey that the ordinary stagecoach passenger used to experience, and that such a passenger's experiences will, in turn, affect the continued progress of the wider world. Eliot must make such statements and comparisons in her early fiction without seeming too theoretical: the word 'cosmopolitan' dropped into her fiction in the 1860s would risk prejudicing the reader against Eliot's project of reconciling the international and peripatetic (the 'modern Odyssey') with the national and static ('English life' and 'English labours'). The 'modern Odyssey', in other words, is internally present in the characters themselves, as much as externally present in the places and events dramatized.

Only in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* can the word 'cosmopolitan' be explicitly uttered: by the 1870s, as we have seen, it had become part of intellectual and popular parlance. I hope to show how the form of the historical novel, and within this form the narrative and linguistic technique of bathos, provide Eliot with an experimental solution to her ambivalence about the virtues and failings of cosmopolitanism. With *Romola*, Eliot chooses the medium of the historical novel: 'historical' is taken here to denote history out of living memory. In *Adam Bede* (1859) and *Silas Marner* (1861), she had dealt with what Henry James was famously to designate the '*visitable* past',[29] or history just within the grasp of living memory. In *Romola*, by contrast, Eliot needs the temporal distance of four centuries with which to consider the pros and cons of cosmopolitanism. The Renaissance envisaged as a cultural mid-point, moreover, gives her an intellectual elasticity which means she reaches back to the glory of Greece and the *Ur*-cosmopolitanism of Diogenes, and forward to her own epoch of mid-Victorian England. Within this form, Eliot chooses Renaissance Florence as her setting because its mid-nineteenth century reputation had so recently been elevated – with a host of attendant historiographical assumptions – by Jacob Burckhardt in his *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860). Finally, Eliot chooses the technique of bathos with which to bind together her narrative: bathos brings cosmopolitanism down to earth from the lofty peaks of austere detachment with which it had become associated through the enduring influence of Goethe and Byron, revealing what I call a 'provincial cosmopolitanism', an aspect of Eliot's

[28] Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 5.
[29] James, *Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers, Prefaces to the New York Edition*, 1177.

novelistic art and thought that conceives cosmopolitanism as a bottom-up rather than a top-down process.

By bringing the lofty 'cosmopolitan culture' of Renaissance Florence down to earth, then, Eliot reconciles her enduring interest in the provincial and in provincial lives with a wider vision of total humanity and historical change. Although 'cosmopolitan' and 'cosmopolite' are words unmentioned in *Romola*, this is in keeping with Eliot's resistance to unnecessary anachronism. She would have been aware of the contemporary modishness as well as the ancient origins of the word 'cosmopolitan'; as a term, it would sit uneasily with a culture (the educated elite of 1490s Florence) to whom it represented, on account of Diogenes, an apex of cynicism rather than, as in the nineteenth century, a spectrum ranging from the Byronically cynical to the pragmatically collaborative to the politically idealistic. 'Provincial cosmopolitanism' offers a counterintuitive lens through which to view the novel in this period, the 1860s, arguably the very beginning of cultural modernity.[30] This is the period, Nasser Mufti has argued, during which 'the novel [as a medium] makes the nation *possible*'.[31] Yet Mufti adds the caveat, pertinent to *Romola*, that 'literary texts, especially novels, also carve a space (and time) for the reader to un-imagine the bonds between fellow-countrymen in civil war'.[32] The spectral and omitted word in Mufti's analysis is 'cosmopolitan': to give nationhood a negative narrative form, as Mufti finds the nineteenth-century novel to do, is implicitly to form an association between the historical novel and a cosmopolitan outlook: the novel replaces nationalism with cosmopolitanism, since there are no 'nations' as such visible on the horizon, but also provincialism, since conflict is entirely local and limited by point of view and personal interests.

In the case of George Eliot, what Mufti calls 'the horizon of legibility of nationhood' is dimmed by her intervention in the genre of the historical novel. In *Romola*, a novel in which the bounds between international and civil war in Florence are deliberately blurred, she shows to contemporary readers how Italian nationhood, far from being foretold in the late fifteenth century (in 1860, at the time of Eliot's visit, Italy was undergoing its Reunification or *Risorgimento*), is rendered illegible in the local, Florentine context of civil strife and religious dissent. These latter circumstances occlude the sense of the past that is so necessary,

[30] Baudelaire famously coined the term '*modernité*' in his essay 'The Painter of Modern Life' (1863), the same year as *Romola*'s first publication in book form. See Charles Baudelaire, *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, translated with an Introduction by P. E. Charvet (London: Penguin, 1992), 390-426.
[31] Nasser Mufti, *Civilizing War: Imperial Politics and The Poetics of National Rupture* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 14.
[32] Mufti, *Civilizing War*, 15.

as Eliot (and later Henry James) would conclude, to the 'cosmopolite' character's moral self-justification. In *Romola*, the characters of Tito Melema and Savonarola, as will be seen, are emblematic of this moral failing; they are cosmopolitan in a negative, ahistorical, and ultimately self-destructive sense. But nor is nationalism, *Romola* implies, any more inevitable or desirable than cosmopolitanism as a social condition and political force.

What is more fruitful for Eliot, and for the reader, is an understanding of cosmopolitanism as not only compatible with 'provincial' settings and characters, but also assimilable within the bounds of the historical novel, indeed as something singularly revelatory of the condition of the novel in English culture in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Its relative scarcity as a word in the fiction of the period speaks more for its ambiguity at this time, the 1860s, than it does for its irrelevance; and more for an implied audience of materialist sceptics and philistine nationalists than for a desired audience of free-thinkers and open-minded empathisers. Eliot is doing something radical in presenting in such detail an obscure time and place in her novel; but *Romola* is also conservatively and purposely in line with Eliot's established speciality, namely the dramatization of a visitable past and provincial English life.

ii. *Romola* and provincial cosmopolitanism

In *Romola*, Eliot anticipates the debates about provincialism and cosmopolitanism spearheaded by Matthew Arnold. Chronologically Eliot's central novel and the only one she considered to be a 'historical romance', *Romola* is newly burnished when seen retrospectively in light of the debate about cosmopolitanism and provincialism. Brian Hamnett claims that 'Eliot herself ruins the novel *Romola* by a type of ideological mutilation.'[33] But her ideology is neither as rigid nor as destructive as Hamnett contends. It goes beyond what Hamnett takes it to be, namely the heroine Romola's 'personality and sufferings as the means of human salvation'.[34]

While novels such as Edward Bulwer Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834) had already provided richly detailed depictions of cosmopolitan cultures, winning wide popular appeal, *Romola* considers cosmopolitanism as an aspect of character, so that cosmopolitanism becomes something more nebulous, incorporating both place and character, rather than simply a marker of environment. Unlike its predecessors, *Romola* is also a historical novel

[33] Brian Hamnett, *The Historical Novel in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Representations of Reality in History and Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 201.
[34] Hamnett, *The Historical Novel in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, 200.

that deals paradoxically with the 'anti-historic', specifically the drive against history and the past embodied by the zealous reformist, Savonarola. If *Romola* is an intellectual novel in which character and plot appear subordinate to ideas, cosmopolitanism as an idea is not external to the novel's characters. These characters fight for and against the forces that surround them: the weight of the past, the machinations of politics, marital and family ties, and the possibility of belonging to the world rather than to one's country, city, or party. These are ideological concerns, but in Tito and Savonarola they are also determining of character.

The characters in *Romola* are not simply residents of a cosmopolitan environment; they are participants in the debate about how far cosmopolitanism and provincialism are reconcilable, or antithetical. Richard Hutton, reviewing *Romola* in 1863, noticed the resemblances between Florence in the 1490s and England in the 1860s, calling the former 'that strange era, which has so many points of resemblance with the present'.[35] One of these 'points of resemblance' is the debate about cosmopolitanism and provincialism itself, which informs both Eliot's characterization and her form. The 'cosmopolitan culture' of Renaissance Florence is rendered from within as a provincial garrison town, and characters argue as to how far their sense of citizenship extends while they rarely leave the city. Formally, Eliot's use of point of view seeks to show the inevitable shadowing of cosmopolitanism, and cosmopolitan detachment, by its opposite, a cloistered or wilful provincialism.

Romola is a historical novel that dramatizes the 'anti-historic' attitude of Savonarola and Tito; it is also a novel in which grandeur is easily transmutable into farce. Bathos, the public exhibition of anti-climax, functions as the nearest approach in *Romola* to a cosmopolitan language: a language of world-citizenship both at the level of the text and in the action the text describes. Following Keston Sutherland's definition of bathos as both 'production[s] of bathos in language' and 'productions of stupidity for public view',[36] I argue that Eliot is fundamentally engaged with the bathetic mode as a means of reconciling the provincial with the cosmopolitan in *Romola*, and so with redefining the historical novel in terms of bathos as a means of bringing the past into the bosom of the present, the provincial into the orbit of the cosmopolitan.

Eliot thus makes the historical novel concern itself not simply with what Georg Lukács mockingly calls Jacob Burckhardt's 'glorified great men […] the Renaissance [men] of

[35] Quoted in Carroll (ed.), *George Eliot: The Critical Heritage*, 200.
[36] Keston Sutherland, 'What is Bathos?', in Sara Crangle and Peter Nicholls (eds), *On Bathos: Literature, Art, Music* (London: Continuum, 2010), 7-26 (15).

violence' who 'are separated from the real driving forces of their epoch',[37] but also with the relationship of individuals to their own epoch – in *Romola*, the turbulent but culturally fertile 1490s in Florence – and to the world, as accidental or putative world citizens. Bathos is also an indicator of Eliot's own incipient prescriptive idealist cosmopolitanism (fully evolved in *Deronda*). Eliot's bathos in *Romola* deconstructs the idea of history by demonstrating how characters' consciousness of history, rather than dramatized historical 'events', sustains cosmopolitanism as a viable (and ineffaceable) force in individual lives. Cosmopolitanism as a representational dilemma in the novel is solved, at least partially, by bathos presented as a series of set-piece scenes (such as the Bonfire of the Vanities), and, through these, as an experiment in the language of irony.

Cosmopolitanism, then, is revelatory of Eliot's broader cultural thinking at the mid-point of her career: she is yet to embrace the Hegelian understanding of history that shines through in her final and most contemporary novel, *Daniel Deronda*, but she is also emerging from the well-established Byronic paradigm of the cosmopolitan cynic. Eliot in writing *Romola* therefore sits at a crucial crossroads both ideologically and artistically. She is inevitably affected as a historical novelist by what Lukács called the 'extraordinary broadening of horizons' occasioned by the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, and more pertinently by the 1848 revolutions, which for Lukács gave writers 'the choice of either recognizing the perspective held out by the new period in human development and of affirming it, […] or of sinking into the position of apologists for a declining capitalism'.[38]

In *Romola*, Eliot chooses a path that makes the broadening of horizons and perspectival choices itself the subject-matter of the historical novel. Despite the obvious contemporary relevance to *Romola* of Italian Reunification (*Risorgimento*), the ideological undercurrent in such horizon-broadening is for Eliot cosmopolitan rather than nationalist: the medium of the novel, as Mufti argues, 'also creates the condition for the nation's *impossibility* [his emphasis]', leaving an ideological vacuum that cosmopolitanism, in *Romola*, is ripe to replace. This must be a 'provincial', down-to-earth cosmopolitanism, however, rather than a 'detached' cosmopolitanism, since Eliot is not (and never will be) prepared to abandon her conviction, asserted didactically in *Adam Bede*, that 'the existence of insignificant people has

[37] Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, translated from the German by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell, introduction by Fredric Jameson (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 179.
[38] Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, 4, 30.

very important consequences in the world.'[39] In *Romola*, Eliot makes this point less obtrusively but more diffusely by putting comic bathos, as opposed to tragic pathos, at the centre of her narrative method.

The nature and function of communication has been seen as essential to the position of *Romola* in Eliot's *oeuvre*. David Wayne Thomas, following Amanda Anderson's reading of *Deronda*, argues that *Romola* is both 'Eliot's attempted reflection on modernity' (a reflection necessarily using a historical setting) and a novel particularly concerned with 'the thematics of communicative action, to use a phrase widely associated with the work of Jürgen Habermas. For Habermas, the use of language implicates users in an ideal of coercive consensus-seeking through deliberation and argument.'[40] Here, Thomas is correct to discern in *Romola* a 'proto-Habermasian' preoccupation with communication as a lynchpin of historicized modernity,[41] but he avoids analysing those moments in *Romola* when spoken and written language as a communicative force fails to function in such an idealistic way, when characters do not speak the same language, and bathos, the public exhibition of stupidity, takes its place.

Even as Thomas notices, for example, 'the nonconceptual or nonlinguistic nature of Savonarola's power, not only over Romola but more generally',[42] he does not connect this power with the failure of direct speech to inculcate what he later describes as the lesson bequeathed by the novel's conclusion, namely 'a moralized species of humility' (as seen in Romola's care for the Jewish refugees outside Florence).[43] Only bathos has the capacity, I hope to show, to turn a bloodless, detached cosmopolitan attitude into something down-to-earth but no less politically significant: a provincial cosmopolitanism. Eliot's originality is to bring bathos, and an emphasis on a sense of the past, to the forefront of a redefinition of what it means to be cosmopolitan in a novelistic historical setting. What Thomas calls Tito's 'repressiveness', and Savonarola's 'energies of fanaticism' and 'forms of aspiration and practical idealism',[44] are two sides of Eliot's thinking about how cosmopolitanism can best be

[39] George Eliot, *Adam Bede* [1859], edited by Carol A. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001) (The Clarendon Edition of the Novels of George Eliot), 63.
[40] David Wayne Thomas, '*Romola*: Historical Narration and the Communicative Dynamics of Modernity', in *A Companion to George* Eliot, edited by Amanda Anderson and Harry E. Shaw (2013; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 129-140 (130).
[41] Thomas, '*Romola*', 139.
[42] Thomas, '*Romola*', 136.
[43] Thomas, '*Romola*', 139.
[44] Thomas, '*Romola*', 135.

expressed. It must be neither too pragmatically constrictive of others' autonomy (as Tito's is), nor too idealistic and futurist (as is Savonarola's).

iii. Eliot's intervention in the historical novel

Post-war critics of Eliot such as Barbara Hardy and Dorothea Barrett, discussing Eliot's intervention in the historical novel, emphasize the importance of her use of a female point of view; she effectively rewrites history, they argue, through the interpolation of a fictional female subject.[45] Following this critical trend, Kelly E. Battles argues that, in *Romola*, 'Eliot's act of intervention' in the historical novel was her 'shaping history as a female writer', something that 'mirrors Romola's position as a female participant on the public historical stage.'[46] Thomas enumerates the other recurring concerns of *Romola* criticism in the twenty-first century, namely its relationship to 'Victorian liberalism', and its cooperation in the 'affective dynamics of modern novel reading'.[47] Without disputing these emphases – liberalism, feminism, affect theory – on their own terms, I hope to show that cosmopolitanism – the point of view in which one sees oneself, individually, to be a citizen of the world – by its dual focus on the individual and the world, provides a more solid template for Eliot's understanding of the relationship between fiction and history in *Romola*. Barrett states that '[i]t is in difference rather than sameness that the historical setting and its parallel stories [in *Romola*] become meaningful.'[48] But difference and sameness are both essential to giving the fullest meaning to Eliot's artistic project in *Romola*. Cosmopolitanism and a sense of the past function as means by which the 'historical novel' gains a new, ethically serious, intellectually challenging purpose, going beyond Hawthornean 'romance' on the one hand, and on the other, going beyond academic historical inquiry in which the past is seen to need rescuing from unintelligibility or oblivion.

Eliot explains her ideas about historical fiction in a notebook entry, published posthumously in *Essays and Leaves from a Note-Book* (1885). Her remark about history's 'turning-points'

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[45] Hardy and Barrett both find Romola to counterbalance the historical character of Savonarola, who figures prominently in the novel. Hardy notes that 'for part of the book Romola and Savonarola are presented as parallels, but the pattern changes, and for a while Savonarola is grouped with Tito' (Barbara Hardy, *The Novels of George Eliot: A Study in Form* [1959; New York: Oxford University Press, 1967], 86). Similarly, Barrett in her introduction to the novel contrasts Savonarola with Romola, 'historic man and hypothetical woman, the subject of history and the object of fiction' (George Eliot, *Romola*, with an introduction [and notes] by Dorothea Barrett [London: Penguin, 2005], xvi).

[46] Kelly E. Battles, 'George Eliot's *Romola*: A Historical Novel "Rather Different in Character"', *Philological Quarterly* 88:3 (Summer 2009), 215-237 (215).

[47] Thomas, '*Romola*', 130.

[48] George Eliot, *Romola*, with an introduction [and notes] by Dorothea Barrett (London: Penguin, 2005), xi.

anticipates not only her vivid depiction of Florence following the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent, but also Ibsen's artistic depiction, in *Emperor and Galilean*, of another momentous historical 'turning-point':

> Utopian pictures help the reception of ideas as to constructive results, but hardly so much as vivid presentation of how results have actually been brought about, especially in religious and social change. And there is the pathos, the heroism often accompanying the decay and final struggle of old systems, which has not had its share of tragic commemoration. What really took place in and around [the Roman Emperor] Constantine before, upon, and immediately after his declared conversion [to Christianity]? Could a momentary flash be thrown on Eusebius in his sayings and doings as an ordinary man in bishop's garments? Or on Julian and Libanius? There has been abundant [historical] writing on such great turning-points, but not such as serves to instruct the imagination in true comparison. I want something different from the abstract treatment which belongs to grave history from a doctrinal point of view, and something different from the schemed picturesqueness of ordinary historical fiction. I want brief, severely conscientious reproductions, in their concrete incidents, of pregnant movements in the past.[49]

The past, for Eliot, does not exist simply to be romanticized, or revived to the historian's credit; rather, it exists to be rewritten in accordance with the very challenges that we flatter ourselves are particular to our own times. Sameness and difference should be woven together in the historical novel, even if this cannot be done seamlessly; in Eliot's conception of the historical novel, solidity, or the particularity of unfamiliar historical detail, should not turn into stolidity, or an oversaturation of detail at the expense of character development.

Bruce Robbins points out that 'Rome [in *Middlemarch*] merely stands in for ambiguities of cosmopolitanism that were already visible elsewhere in Eliot's fiction',[50] but leaves these other 'ambiguities' tantalisingly unspecified. As with Anderson's and Small's criticism, *Romola* is the absent 'elsewhere' in Robbins' analysis, despite the obvious cultural and historical associations between Rome and Florence, two prime examples of solid, tangible history accessible in fiction if not necessarily in fact to most of Eliot's prospective readers. Eliot herself was aware of the 'ambiguities of cosmopolitanism' represented by the common European classical tradition, as another notebook entry makes plain:

> The supremacy given in European cultures to the literature of Greece and Rome has had an effect almost equal to that of a common religion in binding the Western nations together. It is foolish to be ever complaining of the consequent uniformity […] When a multitude of men have learned to use the

[49] George Eliot, *Essays and Leaves from a Note-Book* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1885), 302-303.
[50] Robbins, 'The Cosmopolitan Eliot', 408.

> same language in speech and writing, then and only then can the greatest masters of language arise. […] Originality of this order changes the wild grasses to world-feeding grain. Idiosyncrasies are pepper and spices of questionable aroma.[51]

On the one hand, a common language and literature binds people together in understanding and sympathy, becoming 'world-feeding grain'. On the other hand, the greatest masters of language are necessarily original and idiosyncratic. The historical novel Eliot conceived in *Romola* was deliberately interrogative of a literary culture in thrall to a classical past; but to make that culture solid and comprehensible to nineteenth-century readers was itself a project of cultural translation, and so of attempted assimilation within a perceived common cultural heritage.

Certainly, the question of visibility and solidity in the historical novel was a vexed one for contemporary readers of George Eliot. Looking for clues in life to Eliot's art, Henry James was conscious that Warwickshire was not only 'Shakespeare's county' but 'also George Eliot's': the 'stranger' – James characteristically puts himself in an anonymous, alien visitor's shoes – 'says to himself that it would be impossible to conceive anything – anything equally rural – more sturdily central, more densely definite.'[52] He found that, although *Romola* 'is on the whole the finest thing [Eliot] wrote', its 'great defect is that, except in the person of Tito Melema, it does not seem positively to live. It is overladen with learning, it smells of the lamp, it tastes just perceptibly of pedantry.'[53] It was not, in short, sufficiently accessible to most readers, even educated or travelled ones such as James.

Given James's preference for what he famously called 'a palpable imaginable *visitable* past – […] the nearer distances and the clearer mysteries',[54] and the unusual remoteness of Eliot's fictional setting in *Romola*, James's admitted preference for *Romola* (despite his reservations) is at first surprising. But while he then goes on to find its scholarliness – its excessive reliance on documents and written sources, of which Davis counts 'over 150 books' including 'the complete works of Savonarola'[55] – to be a defect, it is also true that Eliot's understanding of history in the novel chimes closely with James's. For both writers, the historian's primary aim is to access, as far as possible, individual experience. Cosmopolitanism is related to this

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[51] Eliot, *Essays and Leaves from a Note-Book*, 303.
[52] Henry James, *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*, edited by Richard Howard (New York: Library of America, 1993), 178.
[53] Henry James, *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*, edited by Leon Edel and Mark Wilson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1005-1006.
[54] James, *Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers, Prefaces to the New York Edition*, 1177.
[55] Davis, *Transferred Life*, 285.

task by being a model for how to live in and perceive the world as both universal and particular, and so come to a better means of reconciling history and literature, fact and fiction. Setting and intellectual background aid in the quest for the rendering of individual experience universalized. Robbins notes that Casaubon in *Middlemarch* is in one sense 'an archetypal anti-cosmopolitan' despite his insatiable interest in 'comparative mythology',[56] but does not link this contradictory character to *Romola*, whether to Tito's paradoxical combination of geographical range and anti-historicism or to Savonarola's incongruous narrowness and aspiration towards universal redemption.

Yet *Romola* is a 'historical romance' in Eliot's formula, and despite the density of its setting and intellectual background, it also justifies Nathaniel Hawthorne's understanding of the 'romance' as distinct from the novel, namely something evoking a state in which all objects are 'so completely seen, are so spiritualized by the unusual light, that they seem to lose their actual substance, and become things of the intellect.'[57] Hawthorne's definition anticipates James's criticism, but makes what James finds a fault into a virtue. *Romola*'s cerebral weight, rather than being read as a defect, should instead be read, following Hawthorne, in a positive way as something entirely necessary for Eliot writing with a cosmopolitanizing purpose.

Philip Davis claims that 'for George Eliot, the best form and holding place for […] human content […] was the realist novel because it allowed the most powerful parts of life – such as Romola's response to the execution of her godfather [in Chapter 60] – an uncategorized place in the described world. […] George Eliot would sacrifice the aesthetic completeness, and risk the autonomy of a book for the intense immediate interest of whatever might be learned from it.'[58] But what James called 'the smell of the lamp', the cerebral and factual background evident in *Romola*, is necessary to give weight to Eliot's concern with the accidental and uncategorizable. The weight of history balances the experiment of allowing the novel to make its own, psychological interest visible. Eliot's scholarship is not opposed to the psychological interest; rather, it reinforces that interest by the force of its historicism. *Romola* could never be seen to exist on a purely psychological plane, like some of James's later novels, because

[56] Robbins, 'The Cosmopolitan Eliot', 407-408.
[57] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* [1850], edited with notes by Brian Harding, with a new introduction by Cindy Weinstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 30.
[58] Davis, *Transferred Life*, 286-287.

its psychological speculation, like cosmopolitanism, needs what James in 'The Art of Fiction' (1884) calls 'solidity of specification' to keep it fresh.[59]

A novel must live, and it must therefore evoke life: *Romola* does this partly by a consciousness that 'life' must be pluralized to 'lives' – family feuds, such as those found in the novels of Walter Scott, must give way to 'unhistorical quarrels'[60] – and partly by an understanding that the 'historical romance' must go beyond factual restatement tied loosely to imagined incident. Character must proceed organically, and a sense of history hanging in the balance, rather than history made predictable with the benefit of hindsight or with formulaic plots, is essential to the cosmopolitanizing of the novel aesthetically and ideologically. This is especially true in an age of political turbulence – the second half of the nineteenth century – during which nationalisms and imperialisms were rendering the world better connected and, perhaps, more homogeneous. Helen Small reminds us of 'nineteenth-century cosmopolitanism's antithetical relation to patriotism',[61] and *Romola* is a novel in which Florentine patriotism and civic duty are contrasted with the wider (though not necessarily deeper) vision of the cosmopolite. Eliot complicates this antithesis, however, by making Florence into a site not of grand deeds but of ignoble or petty actions.

Edward Bulwer Lytton, in his Preface to *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), writes of the 'difficulty' of how 'to make the characters introduced "live and move" before the eye of the reader',[62] and of 'rais[ing] scholarship to the creative' rather than 'bow[ing] the creative to the scholastic.'[63] This intention approaches Eliot's, but Bulwer Lytton is less interested in having the characters question their cosmopolitan inheritance than simply displaying it as part of the apparatus of the time and place. In *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1861), a novel set like *Romola* in the fifteenth century (albeit a northern European fifteenth century conflated with the waning of the Middle Ages), Charles Reade's narrator anticipates Eliot's famous 'Prelude' at the beginning of *Middlemarch* in his championing of obscure lives. However, Reade prefaces his own didacticism:

> Not a day passes over the earth, but men and women of no note do great deeds, speak great words, and suffer noble sorrows. Of these obscure heroes, philosophers, and some martyrs, the greater part will never be known till that hour, when many that are great shall be small, and the small great; but of

[59] James, *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*, 53.
[60] Eliot, *Romola*, 10.
[61] Small, 'George Eliot and the Cosmopolitan Cynic', 86.
[62] Edward Bulwer Lytton, *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834; Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1842), x.
[63] Bulwer Lytton, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, xi.

> others the world's knowledge may be said to sleep: their lives and characters lie hidden from nations in the annals that record them.[64]

Reade also assumes that the past is simply to be interpreted by the historical novelist, and the reader patronized, rather than the past dramatized in such a way that the reader is fully implicated as an intelligent agent in the narrative. His subtitle for the novel, 'A Matter-of-Fact Romance', displays without irony a contradiction and confusion of intention that Eliot's *Romola*, by the insertion of a 'Proem' that romantically but coolly dramatizes the historical problems inevitable for the historical novelist, skilfully avoids.

If *Romola*'s setting differs markedly from the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England evoked in Eliot's other novels, it is not intellectually inconsistent with them. Of the others, only *Daniel Deronda*, the last, strays, as it were, outside England, and even then, does so only for a small proportion of the text. Although contemporary critics such as Hutton immediately explained Eliot's setting of Renaissance Florence in *Romola* by finding it to be a mirror of nineteenth-century England, and although critics in recent times have followed suit,[65] less has been said about Eliot's Florence on its own terms. What Stefano Evangelista calls the Victorians' 'drive to historicise their own modernity'[66] is only part of Eliot's intention: the comparisons she invites are not only between past and present, but within the world of the past as it is seen through different eyes, and between the past about which she ostensibly writes (the 1490s) and the remoter past which constitutes, for some of her characters, their own sense of history. *Romola* is not a novel about 'the past', but a novel about various perspectives on the present – the characters' present – as seen in a unifying retrospect.

Romola is essentially the story of a young woman's deception by her husband, Tito, against the backdrop of the rise and fall of the religious reformer, Girolamo Savonarola, in the years following the death of Lorenzo de' Medici, ruler of the nominally republican Florence in the 1490s. It is a novel in which history welds together the provincial and the cosmopolitan so that cosmopolitanism is assimilated with provincial as well as metropolitan lives, in order to rewrite history and revitalize the historical novel. Eliot's Florence, itself a character in

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[64] Charles Reade, *The Cloister and the Hearth; or, Maid, Wife, and Widow: A Matter-of-Fact Romance* (New York: Rudd and Carleton, 1861), 5.

[65] Dorothea Barrett notes that '*Romola* creates an entire network of correspondences between the times of its setting and that in which it is written', particularly philosophical and political questions (George Eliot, *Romola*, edited with an introduction [and notes] by Dorothea Barrett [London: Penguin, 2005], xiii).

[66] Stefano-Maria Evangelista, '*Victorian and Edwardian Responses to the Italian Renaissance* (review)', *Victorian Studies*, 48:4 (Summer 2006), 729-731 (729).

Romola, is both a culturally dominant, epoch-making city and a beleaguered and provincialized small town, something that can only be fully understood with historical hindsight. Unlike Romola, Tito and Savonarola do not learn to sympathize with others, but this is not as conspicuous a failure on their part as their failure to clarify and give the weight of historical consciousness to an intellectually hazy cosmopolitanism (Tito's private and secular, Savonarola's public and religious) by which they are otherwise most clearly outlined as characters. 'The fact is, I'm a stranger in Florence',[67] Tito says, outlining the terms on which he faces the world he lives in; Savonarola is animated entirely by his vision of 'the sword of God's justice', 'which was speedily to descend with purifying punishment on the Church and the world.'[68]

The imminent French invasion of the Italian peninsula, and of Florence in particular, an undertaking reminiscent of Hannibal's crossing of the Alps in order to attack ancient Rome, looms over the action of much of the novel. But the narrator is ironic about the historical significance of this event, when the most pressing subject of interest for Florence at this time was the advent, from within its own walls, of the religious and political power of Savonarola. The historical significance of the French invasion is considered, provisionally, as part of a grand narrative, only for its true significance to be found to lie in its emotional representation through Savonarola's epoch-defining character:

> Surely, on a general statement, hardly anything could seem more grandiose, or fitter to revive in the breasts of men the memory of great dispensations by which new strata had been laid in the history of mankind. And there was a very widely spread conviction that the advent of the French king and his army into Italy was one of those events at which marble statues might well be believed to perspire, phantasmal fiery warriors to fight in the air, and quadrupeds to bring forth monstrous births—that it did not bring to the universal order of Providence, but was in a peculiar sense the work of God. It was a conviction that rested less on the necessarily momentous character of a powerful foreign invasion than on certain moral emotions to which the aspect of the times gave the form of presentiments—emotions which had found a very remarkable utterance in the voice of a single man.[69]

This 'single man', Savonarola, himself 'in a peculiar sense the work of God', exemplifies the reduction of historical consciousness to the personal, local, and emotional. Historical 'strata' are condensed and refined into 'moral emotions'.

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[67] Eliot, *Romola*, 11.
[68] Eliot, *Romola*, 211.
[69] Eliot, *Romola*, 209.

Italy itself, according to Theophrastus in *Impressions*, became animated, in the half-century between 1839 and 1879, by a new sense of nationhood that made it less a watering-place of the stereotyped cosmopolite figure, the Anglo-American tourist, and more consciously the home of people who find in their country's history a morally upright model of patriotism from which a wider vision of world citizenship proceeds:

> Half a century ago, what was Italy? An idling-place of dilettantism or of itinerant motiveless wealth, a territory parcelled out for papal sustenance, dynastic convenience, and the profit of an alien Government. […] Thanks chiefly to the divine gift of a memory which inspires the moments with a past, a present, and a future, and gives a sense of corporate existence that raises man above the otherwise more respectable and innocent brute, all that, or most of it, is changed.[70]

This old Italy, swept away by Reunification, stretches all the way back, in Eliot's imagination, to the Renaissance Italy of Romola, Tito, and Savonarola. *Romola* shows how one, debased kind of cosmopolitanism – 'dilettantism' and 'itinerant motiveless wealth' – was an aspect of Italy's perceived provincialism even in the late fifteenth century. But only a sense of the past, and moreover 'a sense of corporate existence' synthesizing the past, present, and future, redeems both the inhabitant of Italy and the itinerant cosmopolite from this particular kind of moral debasement.

Eliot intervenes in the historical novel, then, not only by exhibiting a female consciousness through Romola, and by rewriting history as a female writer, but also by exhibiting a new conscientiousness about history itself. In so doing, she cosmopolitanizes a genre that had hitherto been seen as necessarily limited in time and place, and predicated on fidelity (or romantic infidelity) to partial historical sources. The narrator's description of Tito's first impressions of Giotto's bell-tower and baptistery in the middle of Florence, to which he is led by Nello the barber, ends with explanatory clauses that would not exist in Walter Scott's or Charles Reade's historical fiction:

> The mercurial barber seized the arm of the stranger, and led him to a point, on the south side of the piazza, from which he could see at once the huge dark shell of the cupola, the slender soaring grace of Giotto's campanile, and the quaint octagon of San Giovanni in front of them, showing its unique gates of storied bronze, which still bore the somewhat dimmed glory of their original gilding. The inlaid marbles were fresher in their pink and white and purple than they are now, when the winters of four centuries have turned their white to the rich ochre of well-mellowed meerschaum; the façade of the Cathedral did not stand ignominious in faded stucco, but had upon it the magnificent promise of the half-completed marble inlaying and statued niches, which Giotto had devised a hundred and fifty

[70] Eliot, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, 144.

> years before; and as the campanile in all its harmonious variety of colour and form led the eyes upward, high into the clear air of this April morning, it seemed a prophetic symbol, telling that human life must somehow and some time shape itself into accord with that pure aspiring beauty.[71]

The metaphysical extrapolation is characteristically Eliotic: what Eliot aspires to do in *Romola* is precisely to 'shape [human life]' in accordance with 'pure aspiring beauty'. '[S]omehow and some time' gestures metatextually and self-reflexively towards the historical novel, the nineteenth century, and *Romola* itself, which must contain human life with the kind of elasticity not allowed to other art forms, however apparently 'harmonious'. This self-consciousness, and the metaphysical aspiration that underpins it, distinguish *Romola* from preceding historical novels. It is a novel about history turning to face the future but also pointing back towards a remoter past, about 'magnificent promise' replacing 'ignominious[ness]', and about 'variety of colour and form' leading to 'clear air'. The perspective of the 'stranger' (Tito, we learn later) is the vehicle for this metaphysical extrapolation.

In these respects, Eliot builds more on the dramatic monologues of Robert Browning's *Men and Women* (1855) than she does on earlier prose fiction. In *Men and Women*, commonsense physical reality is frequently shown to be insufficient to satisfy the human desire for metaphysical understanding, and art aspires to depict the soul as well as the body. For Browning, as for Eliot, Giotto, the painter and architect, is a particular touchstone, someone whose art is almost disturbingly tactile (both Browning and Eliot anticipate Bernard Berenson's famous description, later in the nineteenth century, of Giotto's 'giving tactile values to retinal impressions'[72]). In the poem 'Fra Lippo Lippi', the eponymous painter – a historical figure fictionalized by Browning, just as Eliot fictionalizes Savonarola and Machiavelli – praises Giotto for inviting us to praise him, just as Giotto's own painted saints praise God:

> Here's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising God,
> That sets us praising,—why not stop with him?
> Why put all thoughts of praise out of our head
> With wonder at lines, colours, and what not?

[71] Eliot, *Romola*, 30-31.
[72] Bernard Berenson, *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance, with an Index to Their Works* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896), 4.

> Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!
> Rub all out, try at it a second time.[73]

The vertical bell-tower, leading Tito's eye upward and becoming a model for human life, provides a model for historical fiction, too: Eliot must 'rub all out, try at it a second time', and 'paint the soul'. For this reason, form is as significant as content in Eliot's project of renewing the historical novel in *Romola*. The 'Proem' foregrounds the novel's formal structure, and its three-volume format, by enumerating 'the main headings of [humankind's] history—hunger and labour, seed-time and harvest, love and death.'[74] Eliot therefore impresses upon the reader the need for material history (which encompasses 'hunger and labour, seed-time and harvest') to co-exist with a history of the soul ('love and death'). The 'Proem' as a whole is crucial in anticipating the aspects of the novel that I have outlined. It provides a clear demonstration of how history welds together the provincial and the cosmopolitan in *Romola*, and functions to frame the reader's response by the themes it establishes.

iv. 'A certain historical spot': the 'Proem'

As we have seen, *Romola* opens with what Eliot calls a 'Proem', an ironic, informative prelude to the main narrative, and different in kind from the self-reflexive prefaces of earlier novelists' productions. The narrator describes the shade or spirit of a Florentine citizen of the late fifteenth century descending to observe Florence in the mid-nineteenth century, Eliot's own time. In imagining the ghost of a fifteenth-century Florentine confronting the nineteenth-century city, Eliot does something original. She makes real a dual process: on the one hand, the citizen's identification with Florence as he remembers it; and on the other, our identification with the citizen in his assessments of a place that we too can (at least imaginatively) access.

The narrator's use of the subjunctive underscores the simultaneous detachment and down-to-earthness that is at the heart of the 'Proem', and which immediately marks *Romola* as an experimental novel:

> Even if, instead of following the dim daybreak, our imagination pauses on a certain historical spot and awaits the fuller morning, we may see a world-famous city, which has hardly changed its outline since the days of Columbus, seeming to stand as an almost unviolated symbol, amidst the flux of human

[73] Robert Browning, *The Major Works*, edited with notes by Adam Roberts, with an introduction by Daniel Karlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 178.
[74] Eliot, *Romola*, 3.

> things, to remind us that we still resemble the men of the past more than we differ from them, as the great mechanical principles on which those domes and towers were raised must make a likeness in human building that will be broader and deeper than all possible change.[75]

Paradoxically, it is buildings rather than people, the narrator suggests, that remind us of our common humanity across time as well as across culture. Florence is, profoundly, a 'historical spot': it unites history and geography just as people unite similarity and difference.

Eliot's insistence that 'we still resemble the men of the past more than we differ from them' finds an intellectual defence in the historical writings of Thomas Carlyle, whose research gave it some scholarly credence. In his edition of *The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* (1845), Carlyle claims that the past can live again even after centuries of change and historical neglect. In presenting himself as rescuing Cromwell's letters from the unintelligibility of historical oblivion, Carlyle argues that the past can be made intelligible through personal documents such as letters:

> The Letter hangs there in the dark abysses of the past: if like a star almost extinct, yet like a real star; fixed; about which there is no cavilling possible. […] These Letters of Oliver will convince any man that the Past did exist! By degrees the combined small twilights may produce a kind of general feeble twilight, rendering the Past credible, the Ghosts of the Past in some glimpses of them visible![76]

Like Cromwell's letters, Eliot's Florence is a kind of objective correlative (T. S. Eliot's term) of past humankind's tangibility. Florence is already 'world-famous' (though that this must be stated is a marker of its dubiousness, and of Eliot's need once more to reiterate a common assumption), and therefore unlikely to require the dramatic rescuing that Carlyle grandly claims to undertake in his edition of Cromwell's letters. What it requires instead, and what suits Eliot's timely intervention during the era of Italian Reunification, is a dramatic representation that makes it fresh for a new, historically conscious time and an ever-expanding readership.

Such representation was central to Victorians' understanding of Renaissance Italy. As Hilary Fraser points out, the Italian Renaissance was not merely used as subject-matter, but itself 'resurrected, and indeed appropriated' for the nineteenth century by Victorian writers and visual artists.[77] Yet often such appropriation rather awkwardly places the past within a

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[75] Eliot, *Romola*, 3-4.
[76] Thomas Carlyle (ed.), *The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell with Elucidations by Thomas Carlyle* [1845]. Edited in Three Volumes with Notes, Supplement and Enlarged Index by S. C. Lomas, with an Introduction by C. H. Firth (London: Methuen, 1904), i.68.
[77] Hilary Fraser, *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992), 42.

present suited to the artist's preconceptions without allowing the reader or spectator to exercise fully his or her free curiosity about the past. Direct comparison between past and present is one way, in a novel, of gesturing towards the mind of the reader, but this can seem stilted. In *Romola,* Eliot calls letters 'the literary periodicals of the fifteenth century',[78] thus emphasizing both their circulation in Renaissance Florence and their enduring historical value as documentary material of both public cultural tendencies and personal impressions. This sense of circulation and circularity is essential to Eliot's conception of coherence between past and present; it is also part of her emphasis on the inextricability of public and private in *Romola*.

This understanding of the inextricability of public and private gives Eliot's technique a saving quality of including the reader in the culture concerned, Renaissance Italy, without losing a sense of that culture's difference from the present. In another instance, Eliot calls the Bardi family of Florence 'the Christian Rothschilds of that time',[79] a comparison Henry James reiterates in *A Little Tour in France* (1884) when he describes Jacques Coeur, a French merchant and trader with the Near East, as 'a Vanderbilt or Rothschild of the fifteenth century'.[80] The awkwardness of such direct comparisons is mitigated by this underlying sense of dual likeness and difference. This sense is more than a banality, because at the beginning of the novel it also extends to the reader. In the 'Proem', we are spirits as much as the Florentine spirit who is introduced as a critical historian of the future: the 'dim daybreak' in Florence, like the 'general feeble twilight' of Carlyle's historian, is all the light that is needed for us to begin to see the past as real and credible. The reader is formally and therefore morally implicated in the novel.

For Eliot, crucially, this shedding of light on the past, implicating the reader, is also what gives us, as well as her characters, the agency to extrapolate a sense of world-citizenship from the narrowness of their – or our – present field of vision. The narrator proceeds seamlessly from 'our' imagined field of vision to that of a Florentine citizen of four centuries earlier; there is no break of paragraph as the narrator goes on. The idea of vision itself continues to predominate:

> And doubtless, if the spirit of a Florentine citizen, whose eyes were closed for the last time while Columbus was still waiting and arguing for the three poor vessels with which he was to set sail from

[78] Eliot, *Romola*, 76.
[79] Eliot, *Romola*, 45.
[80] James, *Collected Travel Writings: The Continent*, 97.

> the port of Palos, could return from the shades and pause where our thought is pausing, he would believe that there must still be fellowship and understanding for him among the inheritors of his birthplace.[81]

For the spirit to 'pause where our thought is pausing' is a clear statement on Eliot's part of the connection between past and present; for thoughts to pause synchronically is a metaphor for the continuity of impressions and of history. If the citizen died before the discovery of the New World, nevertheless he too, Eliot implies, teeters on the brink of another new world, the afterlife in which, as a spirit, he will see the city of his earthly existence as from a bird's-eye perspective and with our historical hindsight.

For Eliot's predecessors in the genre of the historical novel, Walter Scott, Edward Bulwer Lytton, and Charles Reade, history is subsumed within the absolute authority of the narrator whose interpretation, or representation, of the past is assumed to be coterminous with the reader's viewpoint and the reader's demands for history as fictional narrative. Eliot fragments this understanding. The spirit's double vision – his vision of the (nineteenth-century) present and his recollection of the (fifteenth-century) past – does not suggest any final authority, but foregrounds and foreshadows a recurring theme in the novel: the confusion and tension between idealistic and pragmatic versions of citizenship, both of Florence (*polis*) and of the world (*cosmos*). This self-consciousness continues throughout the novel, and in the early chapters Eliot extrapolates meaning from physical reality, particularly from buildings, in a way that Bulwer Lytton and Reade do not. Mary McCarthy, writing in the 1950s, reflected (in Freudian language) that Florence is 'a manly town', which by comparison with Venice or Rome 'makes no concession to the pleasure principle'.[82] Eliot had a similar impression a century earlier, so that although Romola is the nominal heroine, Florence itself is implicitly masculinized by its spiritual embodiment in the shape of a male citizen and by 'the men of the past'. It is also cosmopolitanized by its inclusion of characters whose point of view is not limited to the events that happen to themselves alone: they look forward and backward, out and around.

Eliot's Florence of the 1490s is described, as we have seen, as 'a world-famous city' (both in the time of the setting and in the retrospect of the time of writing) and yet 'hardly changed' 'since the days of [Christopher] Columbus'. Such a description immediately raises the question of what constitutes world fame: is it visible antiquity? Or is it the deeds of its

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[81] Eliot, *Romola*, 4.
[82] Mary McCarthy, *The Stones of Florence and Venice Observed* (London: Penguin, 1972), 12.

famous citizens such as Columbus? Can a city such as Florence – always comparatively small, enclosed, and surrounded by hills – be called a world city if its fame rests so largely on the past, whether visible or invisible? Agathocleous argues that London in the late nineteenth century was 'a world made newly visible by the alienating forces of imperialism, capitalism, and technology at work in the city. Writers did not merely reflect a new global consciousness, […] but used the city to shape it – and to relate it to quotidian experience.'[83] Renaissance Florence can be compared to late-Victorian London in likewise creating a newly visible world, of which it becomes its own microcosm, through developments in exploration, capitalism, and technology.

The continuity of Florence, visible in its stone structures, is seen through new eyes in every post-Renaissance generation, and global consciousness is likewise related to the quotidian: the everyday becomes universalized, since it occurs in a cultural microcosm. London's visible changes in the late nineteenth century, in particular the aggrandizing of much of the West End, can be seen as an attempt to catch up, in physical terms, with the new mindset, a literal, retrospective rendering of the world 'made newly visible'. Thus in *Romola*, buildings are an important symbol of Eliot's medium-as-message double vision, being accessible across and between lifespans and ages. In looking at Florence from afar, the spirit inevitably sees the Cathedral (Duomo), which is described in superlative terms as '[t]he great dome, too, greatest in the world, which, in his early boyhood, had been only a daring thought in the mind of a small quick-eyed man [Brunelleschi]'.[84] History therefore welds together the provincial and the cosmopolitan, as the singular vision of the Duomo comes to the fore in the imagined sum of world architecture. Its antiquity compared to other great domes, such as St Peter's in Rome and St Paul's in London, partly explains its perceived superiority.

The nineteenth-century façade of the ancient church of Santa Croce, by contrast, is a source of mild derision, and in questioning its taste, the fifteenth-century spirit echoes the opinion of nineteenth-century tourists such as Eliot for whom it was a new and discordant addition to an old and distinguished building: 'But what architect can the Frati Minori [Franciscans] have employed to build that spire for them? If it had been built in my day, Filippo Brunelleschi or Michelozzo would have devised something of another fashion than that—something worthy to crown the church of Arnolfo [the original architect].'[85] John Ruskin lamented that

[83] Agathocleous, *Urban Realism and the Cosmopolitan Imagination in the Nineteenth Century*, xvi.
[84] Eliot, *Romola*, 4.
[85] Eliot, *Romola*, 5.

Arnolfo's 'old church' had become 'unimpressive' when 'defaced by Vasari, by Michael Angelo, and by modern Florence.'[86] The fact that the façade of Santa Croce was built not in the fifteenth century but the nineteenth shows, for Eliot, that the past can be revised, and revived, but not pasted over. What was once brick is now marble: a sense of the past has become self-serving and wish-fulfilling – the façade expresses how the Middle Ages *ought* to have looked – rather than penetrating and accepting of the past on its own terms. The façade of Santa Croce and *Romola* are two manifestations of the same consciousness of history, but where the façade is merely conscious, *Romola* is conscientious.

Part of Eliot's conscientiousness in *Romola* is her refusal to build a façade of Florence that, like the façade of Santa Croce, undermines its historical integrity. The 'Proem' is therefore not only conscientious but tactful, taking an objective view of Florence filtered through a subjective but coolly appraising voice.[87] Indeed, Eliot's tact masks an awkward need to make clear to the reader at least some of the Florentine historical context before moving swiftly on, as it were, to the story. In a neat solution to this difficulty – which also solves the problem, as we have seen, of how not, Reade-like, to patronize the reader – the facts of topography and history are projected onto the spirit, as, 'with a sigh, [he] lets his eyes travel on to the city walls, and now he dwells on the change there with wonder at these modern times.'[88] This transition from past to present is the turning-point of the 'Proem', and the fact that it hinges on the imprecisely deictic, already clichéd phrase, 'these modern times', echoing Matthew Arnold's poetic 'this strange disease of modern life',[89] is crucial to our understanding of the rest of the novel's effects as well as its purpose.

v. 'These modern times': bringing cosmopolitanism down to earth

'[T]hese modern times' is not meant to be an expression of world-weariness shutting off further argument, but rather an expression of wonderment that opens the way to the concerns of the novel, in which modernity is contingent, paradoxically, upon a new historical-cum-geographical consciousness. After the more languid dismissal of the modern façade of Santa

[86] John Ruskin, *Mornings in Florence* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1877), 17.
[87] David Russell observes that '[t]actless essays open the way to tactful novels: the resources of the essay form [in Eliot's essays pre-*Adam Bede*] are marshaled, not to make use of more hospitable modes of mediation, wider repertoires of relation, but rather to protest precisely the lack of any desire for, or attention to them in the culture in which Eliot lived' (David Russell, *Tact: Aesthetic Liberalism and the Essay Form in Nineteenth Century Britain* [Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018], 98).
[88] Eliot, *Romola*, 5.
[89] Matthew Arnold, 'The Scholar-Gypsy' (1853), in *The Oxford Authors: Matthew Arnold*, edited by Miriam Allott and Robert H. Super (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 213.

Croce, Eliot's anger at institutional corruption and decay, and at the demolition of old buildings with the loss of civic pride implicit in such vandalism, is now projected onto the spirit, who becomes suddenly cynically ironic: 'Why have five out of the eleven convenient gates been closed? And why, above all, should the towers have been levelled that were once a glory and a defence? Is the world become so peaceful, then, and do Florentines dwell in such harmony, that there are no longer conspiracies to bring ambitious exiles home again with armed bands at their back?'[90] The narrator's sage voice, as though holding back from the spirit, then answers: 'These are difficult questions: it is easier and pleasanter to recognize the old than to account for the new.'[91] Eliot's 'account[ing] for the new' in addition to 'recognis[ing] the old' can be restated in other terms: how to make cosmopolitan what is provincial, or how to move beyond the borders of the city (in this case) to seek experiences or ideas that can recast the old in a new light.

The narrator then goes on to emphasize the continuity between the Florentine citizen's cosmopolitan trading network bounded by the old borders of the Roman Empire at its greatest extent, and the circumscription, in a physical sense, of his everyday existence. In this simultaneous reach and withdrawal, encircling breadth and petty narrowness, the spirit anticipates the character of Tito:

> Life had its zest for the old Florentine when he, too, trod the marble steps and shared in those dignities. His politics had an area as wide as his trade, which stretched from Syria to Britain, but they had also a passionate intensity, and the detailed practical interest, which could belong only to a narrow scene of corporate action; only to the members of a community shut in close by the hills and by walls of six miles' circuit, where men knew each other as they passed in the street, set their eyes every day on the memorials of their commonwealth, and were conscious of having not simply the right to vote, but the chance of being voted for.[92]

'Passionate intensity' – a collocation later used by W. B. Yeats in his apocalyptic poem 'The Second Coming'[93] – denotes the feeling that is supposed to accompany the privilege of Florentine citizenship, the privilege of a narrow elite. However, the 'old Florentine' of the Republic is simultaneously a citizen of the 'commonwealth' – the name reminds the reader of the community's basis in capitalism, originating with the Medici (who, ironically, will become autocrats) – and a citizen of the world, involved not only in world trade but in world

[90] Eliot, *Romola*, 5.
[91] Eliot, *Romola*, 5.
[92] Eliot, *Romola*, 6.
[93] W. B. Yeats, *Collected Poems* (London: Picador, 1990), 211.

politics in a cosmopolitan sense. Florentine elitism, geographically circumscribed, thus breaks through into the wider world of politics and trade.

Throughout the 'Proem', Eliot draws on a tradition of individualism that in Florentine terms begins with Dante. Although there is no record of Eliot having read Jacob Burckhardt's essay, *Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* [*The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*] (1860) at the time of writing *Romola*, she was conversant in German and familiar with German scholarship. Moreover, Burckhardt's ideas were in the air at the time, and so would not have been lost on Eliot, particularly during and after her 1860 visit to Florence.[94] Burckhardt summarizes the connection between cosmopolitanism, as he sees it, and the Renaissance cult of the individual:

> The cosmopolitanism which grew up in the most gifted circles is in itself a high stage of individualism. Dante, as we have already said, finds a new home in the language and culture of Italy, but goes beyond even this in the words, 'My country is the whole world.' [Burckhardt quotes from Dante's essay *De Vulgari Eloquentia*.] And when his recall to Florence was offered him on unworthy conditions, he wrote back: 'Can I not everywhere behold the light of the sun and the stars; everywhere meditate on the noblest truths, without appearing ingloriously and shamefully before the city and the people? Even my bread will not fail me.' The artists exult no less defiantly in their freedom from the constraints of fixed residence. 'Only he who has learned everything,' says [Lorenzo] Ghiberti, 'is nowhere a stranger; robbed of his fortune and without friends, he is yet the citizen of every country, and can fearlessly despise the changes of fortune.' In the same strain an exiled humanist writes: 'Wherever a learned man fixes his seat, there is home.'[95]

Dante's physical exile thus becomes the prototype, for Burckhardt, of a means of spiritual and physical transcendence, the same transcendence that Eliot's characters seek in *Romola*. Burckhardt is drawing on such moments in *The Divine Comedy* such as that at the beginning of the *Inferno* where the narrator, Dante, having 'reached the foot of a hill', 'looked upward, and saw its [the hill's] shoulders clothed already with the rays of the planet [the sun] which leads man aright along every path'.[96] Similarly, at the end of the *Paradiso* '[Saint] Bernard

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[94] Cross (ed.), *George Eliot's Life as Related in Her Letters and Journals*, ii.275, which lists a section of Eliot's reading for late 1861, makes no mention of Burckhardt, whose essay found fame in the English-speaking world after its English translation by S. G. C. Middlemore was published in London in 1878.
[95] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* [1860], translated by S. G. C. Middlemore, with an introduction by Peter Burke and notes by Peter Murray (London: Penguin, 2004), 100-101.
[96] Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, translated by Charles Eliot Norton (Complete Edition: Three Volumes in One) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1920), 1-2.

made a sign to me, and smiled, that I should look upward; but I was already, of myself, such as he wished.'[97] Eliot's familiarity with Dante can be taken for granted.

Florence's 'changes of fortune' can be 'fearlessly despise[d]' from a distance, and the exile has greater freedom, arguably, than the citizen of Florence. From the very beginning of *Romola*, Eliot draws on this tradition elaborated by Burckhardt: 'the angel of the dawn […] saw the same great mountain shadows on the same valleys as he has seen to-day […] saw the domes and spires of cities rising by the river sides or mingled with the sedge-like masts on the many-curved sea coast, in the same spots where they rise to-day.'[98] Distance gives historical as well as geographical perspective. This paves the way for the zooming in that begins Chapter 1, when Dante is explicitly a touchstone for Florentine history long predating even the distant past of the 1490s:

> To the ear of Dante, the same streets rang out with the shout and clash of fierce battle between rival families; but in the fifteenth century, they were only noisy with the unhistorical quarrels and broad jests of wool-carders in the cloth-producing quarters of San Martino and Garbo.[99]

In this historical context, *Romola* will make the apparently 'unhistorical' moments historical. We have to imagine the spirit as analogous to the cosmopolitan individualist, Dante, in exile, untrammelled by the quotidian but conscious of the interminability of personal, marital, civil, and military strife. '[T]he ear of Dante', like the spirit, represents cosmopolitan detachment. But Eliot foregrounds her desire to move Florence beyond Dantesque detachment and towards her own vision of provincial cosmopolitanism.

Despite the spirit's civic dignities and his cosmopolitan individualism, he also possesses another Florentine ingredient, Machiavellianism. In this, he foreshadows the character of Tito even more than he does the fictionalized Machiavelli. As a citizen, the spirit 'had learned to distrust men without bitterness; looking on life mainly as a game of skill, but not dead to the traditions of heroism and clean-handed honour.'[100] From here, once again, the universal is extrapolated, and the conjunction 'for' in the sentence which follows makes this, too, seem a natural extrapolation, one as 'hospitable' as the general 'human soul' that is praised:

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[97] Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, 253-254.
[98] Eliot, *Romola*, 3.
[99] Eliot, *Romola*, 10.
[100] Eliot, *Romola*, 6.

> For the human soul is hospitable, and will entertain conflicting sentiments and contradictory opinions with much impartiality.[101]

To 'entertain conflicting sentiments', the narrator contends, is not always to experience an internal struggle, but is sometimes to experience, rather, an unconscious 'impartiality' that overtakes and negates conscious morality.

The narrator restates this in terms of the city itself, which would – it is supposed – provoke in the spirit an entertaining of conflicting sentiments:

> Go not down [into the city], good Spirit! for the changes are great and the speech of Florentines would sound as a riddle in your ears. Or, if you go, mingle with no politicians on the *Marmi* [marble pavements], or elsewhere; ask no questions about the trade in the Calimala [guild of clothiers and cloth merchants]; confuse yourself with no inquiries into scholarship, official or monastic. Only look at the sun-light and shadows on the grand walls that were built solidly, and heave endured in their grandeur; look at the faces of the little children, making another sunlight amid the shadows of age; look, if you will, into the churches, and hear the same chants, see the same images as of old—the images of willing anguish for a great end, of beneficent love and ascending glory; see upturned living faces and lips moving to the old prayers for help. These things have not changed.[102]

What is new and confusing conflicts with what is old and enduring: the two things depend on each other, dualistically, just as 'morning, noon, and eventide' are sustained by their distinctness within a coherent and unchanging pattern. This impartial view – reflected in the spirit's and the narrator's detachment and down-to-earthness – is one kind of cosmopolitanism. But a sense of the past is another, and it is less easily generated. The characters of Tito and Savonarola in *Romola,* and the bathos Eliot creates in her presentation of their 'public' acts as well as their 'private' speech, provides a neat solution to the vertical-horizontal dilemma which I outlined at the beginning of this chapter. In the next chapter, I shall show how bathos functions as a solution to this representational dilemma in Eliot's mid-career conception of the cosmopolitan as reflected in her most culturally cosmopolitan novel.

[101] Eliot, *Romola*, 6-7.
[102] Eliot, *Romola*, 9.

Chapter 2: Strangers in Florence: Tito, Savonarola, cosmopolitanism, and bathos in *Romola*

i. 'A stranger in Florence': Tito's spurious cosmopolitanism

There is a general critical agreement that Tito is the most memorable character in *Romola*, just as Gwendolen is in *Daniel Deronda.* Both characters are the first to be introduced, each occupying more of the text than the eponymous characters, and both are confronted with the historic in a way that turns them cold. Henry James made allowances for Tito as a fully rounded character, claiming that 'except in the person of Tito Melema, [*Romola*] does not seem positively to live'; 'in the career of Tito Melema there is a fuller representation of the development of character [than elsewhere]'.[1] Philip Davis, recently, has agreed that Tito is a superior invention, 'the greatest achievement of [Eliot's] hard middle-aged period', but he also finds him to be 'the most indirect of all her characters'.[2] This indirectness is a reflection of the spuriousness of his cosmopolitanism: Tito is seen indirectly, partly because he sees himself and others indirectly, and partly because he does not ally his strong sense of geography with a sense of history and the historic. He is simultaneously interested and impartially aloof or detached, but without the 'historic sense' that justifies such an attitude.

Whereas Dorothea in *Middlemarch* sees history as a sense of loss, mourning, and grief – in Rome, 'the city of visible history', she finds, 'the past of a whole hemisphere seems moving in funeral procession with strange ancestral images and trophies gathered from afar'[3] – Tito has no such historical vision. Although Tito is seen indirectly in *Romola*, and although he sees others indirectly, he is not thereby misrepresented to the reader. For Nancy Henry, '[Eliot's] moral theory of what fiction should do blurs a line between fact and fiction: misrepresentation is evil in writing because it is evil in life. And misrepresenting oneself, consciously like Tito, or through self-deception, like Mr. Casaubon, can have devastating consequences for others, like Romola and Dorothea.'[4] Eliot makes the reader realise that Tito's indirectness is a consequence of his, not our or Eliot's, misrepresentation of the terms in which he conducts himself.

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[1] James, *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*, 931, 1006.
[2] Davis, *Transferred Life*, 286-287.
[3] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 180.
[4] Henry, *George Eliot and the British Empire*, 49.

Tito is at war with himself as much as he is at war with other characters. This characteristic has been attributed to others in mid-Victorian English writing, most of which concerns England and English life. In *Living Liberalism: Practical Citizenship in Mid-Victorian Britain* (2010), Elaine Hadley identifies what she calls 'a pervasive, transgeneric pattern of subject liberalization in the mid-Victorian period'.[5] The texts she analyses, Anthony Trollope's *The Warden* (1855) and John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography* (1873), 'describe a society arguably more even in temper but one nonetheless inhabited by liberalizing subjects at odds with themselves and others.'[6] She suggests that 'this "oddness" is a constitutive feature of the liberal individual, a feature [that] practitioners embraced as theoretically necessary to individuation but which they also overlooked, ignored, and denied in practice […] such oddness ought to be conceptualized formally rather than psychologically, a function of the logic of the individual *as form* rather than a feature of the individual's psychic richness.'[7] This analysis is also true of *Romola*, a historical novel in which the condition of being at odds with oneself and others, conceptualized formally, is constitutive of what, by the time of *Romola*'s composition, had come to be seen as the liberal individual.[8]

Although Hadley's analysis may seem anachronistic as far as *Romola* is concerned – Eliot risks her characters seeming little more than transposed mid-Victorians – it certainly applies to Tito, whose ahistoricism renders him symbolically at odds with the historical novel form as well as with himself and other characters. Savonarola's oddness, by contrast, is illiberally conformist and aggressively reactionary; in spite of Savonarola's apparent courage in his convictions, he does not know which way to turn in terms of effecting change. Formally, Savonarola is haphazard: initially, '[h]is face was hardly discernible […] the face was hidden';[9] even when visible, he is reduced to his 'penetrating voice' and his 'subtle mysterious influence'.[10] Romola does not see Savonarola, but instead 'heard the voice of Fra Girolamo',[11] just as Baldassare later 'felt himself vibrating to loud tones' (Savonarola's) inside the Duomo.[12] Savonarola is surrounded by 'irrevocable silence',[13] actually projects

[5] Elaine Hadley, *Living Liberalism: Practical Citizenship in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 65.
[6] Hadley, *Living Liberalism*, 65.
[7] Hadley, *Living Liberalism*, 66.
[8] For instance, Burckhardt, *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 98-119 passim.
[9] Eliot, *Romola*, 160
[10] Eliot, *Romola*, 161.
[11] Eliot, *Romola*, 163.
[12] Eliot, *Romola*, 228.
[13] Eliot, *Romola*, 164.

'silence' to his audience in the Duomo,[14] and in talking to Romola, when 'feeling would no longer pass through the channel of speech, […] he was silent.'[15]

Although the characters in *Romola* are not simply transposed mid-Victorians, since their political and social setting is so thoroughly and accurately described, their liberal individualism is one aspect of their characters that the narrator fashions by making them formal oddities. Where Eliot goes beyond liberal individualism, however, is by allying it to a potential cosmopolitanism which, in the cases of Savonarola and Tito, is seemingly contradicted by a provincialism that can be called conservative and anti-individualist. Tito, despite his superficial worldliness and conscious duplicity, fails to reconcile these facets of his character in a formal (or indeed a psychological) sense. His formal wholeness as a character is compromised, as is his psychological and moral integrity. Yet Eliot remains closer, as narrator and as sceptic, to Tito than to Romola. Indeed, if one accepts that Tito and not Romola is the central character, *Romola* does precisely what Hadley observes Trollope to do in *The Warden*, in that 'certain passages figure both the narrator and the central character as simultaneously interested and disinterested subjects.'[16] In this patterning lies the key to Eliot's provincial cosmopolitanism.

Tito's cosmopolitanism is enabled but also undermined by local circumstance, which is only weldable to cosmopolitanism by a sense of history that Tito conspicuously lacks. From his first appearance, Tito is seen in an ahistorical vacuum, and this foreshadows his own attitude to other people. He is asleep and anonymous when first shown; his interlocutor, however, is awake and named. A man called Bratti Ferravecchi wakes Tito, who is newly arrived in Florence and sleeping rough, joking that his fine clothes must have been stolen from a roadside corpse. The black humour makes Tito suddenly more alert:

> Something like a painful thrill appeared to dart through the frame of the listener, and arrest the careless stretching of his arms and chest. For an instant he turned on Bratti with a sharp frown; but he immediately recovered an air of indifference, took off the red Levantine cap which hung like a great purse over his left ear, pushed back his long dark-brown curls, and glancing at his dress, said, smilingly,
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> 'You speak truth, friend: my garments are as weather-stained as an old sail, and they are not old either, only, like an old sail, they have had a sprinkling of the sea as well as the rain. The fact is, I'm a stranger in Florence, and when I came in foot-sore last night I preferred flinging myself in a corner of

[14] Eliot, *Romola*, 230.
[15] Eliot, *Romola*, 367.
[16] Hadley, *Living Liberalism*, 77.

> this hospitable porch to hunting any longer for a chance hostelry, which might turn out to be a nest of blood-suckers of more sorts than one.'[17]

Tito's body language is changeable and ambiguous: 'painful thrill', 'careless stretching', 'sharp frown', 'air of indifference', 'smilingly'. But his speech is polished, practised, almost pre-rehearsed. He is eminently polite but with a slight hint of condescension that might also be self-distancing; he mixes real with false modesty, and liberal trust ('You speak truth, friend') with self-help pragmatism. He is simultaneously interested in other people and aloof from them.

The question of where Tito originates from becomes confused with the question of what defines anyone who happens to be in Florence. There is a great irony in Eliot's presentation of the questioning of Tito by Bratti, but there is also irony in her introduction of Tito's emotional detachment, one of his defining features as a character:

> 'A stranger, in good sooth,' said Bratti, 'for the words come all melting out of your throat, so that a Christian and a Florentine can't tell a hook from a hanger. But you're not from Genoa? More likely from Venice, from the cut of your clothes?'
>
> 'At this present moment,' said the stranger, 'it is of less importance where I come from than where I can go to for a mouthful of breakfast. This city of yours turns a grim look on me just here: can you show me the way to a more lively quarter, where I can get a meal and a lodging?'[18]

Beyond the obvious necessity of eating ('a mouthful of breakfast'), Tito is already staking a claim that makes a virtue of that necessity and also a kind of necessity of virtue, which he equates with hospitality. Bratti, in speaking to Tito, is a 'friend' by default, just as Tito is automatically a 'stranger' in Florence; the exchange is based around these two attributions, both Tito's. The narrator has not yet given us Tito's name, so that he is first 'the listener' and then (in a faintly ironic repetition of Tito's self-description) 'the stranger': this identifies us with Bratti and distances us from Tito, just as we also see him close-up. Both the narrator and Tito are what Hadley calls simultaneously interested and disinterested subjects; but Tito is also a simultaneously interested and disinterested object for the narrator and indeed the reader. There is even a hint of the proverb 'you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear', suggestive of Tito's ultimate intractability, in the description of Tito's Levantine cap. Tito

[17] Eliot, *Romola*, 11.
[18] Eliot, *Romola*, 11.

lives for 'the present moment', but even the moment depends upon a makeshift scale of priorities.

Tito is introduced, the passage shows, as a spurious but self-conscious cosmopolite, less attached to where he originates from (and indeed, for all the reader knows at this point, uncertain of it) than where he is now and how he can make the best of it (where, in the first place, he can eat and stay the night). He is not only a wanderer but also someone whose origins are subsumed into the concerns of the immediate present, as though the past is not only irrelevant, of great concern to no one, but in a more profound sense immaterial. Like Dante in exile, Tito needs only sustenance (Dante, as we have seen, is supposed to have said 'even my bread will not fail me'), but unlike Dante he is not a political exile, nor is he so attached to the city of his birth – he later admits, after much probing, that he 'was born at Bari'[19] – that his wanderings are consciously a spiritual ordeal.

ii. 'As if nothing had happened': Tito's impoverished historicism

If Tito is not a wanderer in a spiritual sense, nevertheless he is a lost soul who presumes his adoptive father to be dead in a shipwreck. This presumption causes Tito no apparent grief, and indeed it precipitates the rejection of history that characterizes his attitude throughout the action of the novel. Whereas Tito's sense of geography, and its relation to his own identity, is capacious, his sense of history is stunted. Tito describes himself to Bardo de' Bardi, Romola's elderly father, as having been 'brought up by an Italian – and, in fact, I am a Greek very much as your peaches are Persian'[20] (that is to say, Greek in name only), and later boasts that 'I have resided both at Constantinople and Thessalonica, and have travelled in various parts little visited by Western Christians since the triumph of the Turkish arms […] I spent the first sixteen years of my life in Southern Italy and Sicily.'[21] Tito's historical sense, however, is largely confined to his own lifetime. It extends no further back than the Turkish victory over the Byzantines at Constantinople in 1453, which he regards as *the* watershed moment in which East moved closer to West and Italian city-states became provincialized.[22] Having answered these questions about his origins, Tito describes Baldassarre, his adoptive father, on Bardo de' Bardi's further questioning, as 'a Neapolitan, and of accomplished

[19] Eliot, *Romola*, 29.
[20] Eliot, *Romola*, 29.
[21] Eliot, *Romola*, 61.
[22] Tito later tells Romola that '[t]his rivalry of Italian cities is very petty and illiberal. The loss of Constantinople was the gain of the whole civilised world' (Eliot, *Romola*, 289).

scholarship both Latin and Greek. But […] he is lost to me—was lost on a voyage he too rashly undertook to Delos.'[23] This personal admission stops further questions, but Romola naively 'felt that this new acquaintance had with wonderful suddenness got within the barrier that lay between them and the alien world.'[24] For Tito, out of sight is out of mind – 'was lost on a voyage' equates to 'is lost to me' – whereas Romola's instinctive feeling that Tito is a missing link between the familiar and the strange, between 'them and the alien world', will come to be sorely tested. This discrepancy in their attitudes comes to be the undoing of Tito and Romola's marriage.

Tito learns of Baldassarre's capture as a slave from a message Baldassarre sends him personally. Since Baldassarre does not know Tito's exact whereabouts, the message identifies him by his appearance. This reinforces our sense of Tito's superficiality as his defining feature, as well as the necessity the other characters have of identifying and judging him by his appearance alone. A monk called Fra Luca, having identified Tito, gives him the message:

> On the outside was written in Italian, in a small but distinct character—
>
> '*Tito Melema, aged twenty-three, with a dark, beautiful face, long dark curls, the brightest smile, and a large onyx ring on his right forefinger.*'[25]

This is the novel's most succinct and direct description of Tito: its list of distinguishing features reinforces our sense of his psychological inscrutability. But Eliot follows this with an analysis of Tito's 'dilemma' (Chapter 11), in which his psychology is examined freely. In this chapter Tito's hedonism, and his sense of the world as necessarily determined by self-interest rather than obligation to others and to his past, are made apparent. What had earlier seemed an innocuous, innocent reserve now turns into a sinister, deliberate obfuscation, as Tito quickly decides a way out of the dilemma of whether or not to go after his captured adoptive father and benefactor. In choosing not to, he can hardly bring himself to acknowledge Baldassare's existence, let alone his enslavement. He wants, above all, to be seen to be independent in a material and a philosophical sense:

> Tito's talent for concealment was being fast developed into something less neutral. It was still possible—perhaps it might be inevitable—for him to accept frankly the altered conditions, and avow Baldassarre's existence—but hardly without casting an unpleasant light backward on his original

[23] Eliot, *Romola*, 61.
[24] Eliot, *Romola*, 61.
[25] Eliot, *Romola*, 113.

> reticence as studied equivocation, in order to avoid the fulfilment of a secretly recognized claim, to say nothing of his quiet settlement of himself and investment of his florins, when, it would be clear, his benefactor's fate had not been certified. It was at least provisionally wise to act as if nothing had happened, and for the present he would suspend decisive thought; there was all the night for meditation, and no one would know the precise moment at which he had received the letter.[26]

Tito's reasons for rejecting the past are multiplied by this turn of events. To 'suspend decisive thought' even for a moment is to reject the significance of the news, the past that shaped him, and even the historical forces – such as the Turkish aggression that he earlier alluded to – that brought about Baldassarre's enslavement. Throughout, Tito behaves 'as though nothing had happened'.

This suspension of thought later hardens into outright deception of himself and others:

> Tito had never had an occasion to fabricate an ingenious lie before: the occasion was come now—the occasion which circumstance never fails to beget on tacit falsity; and his ingenuity was ready. He had once said that on a fair assurance of his father's existence and whereabout[s], he would unhesitatingly go after him. But, after all, *why* was he bound to go? What, looked at closely, was the end of all life, but to extract the utmost sum of pleasure?[27]

The interior monologue reflects Tito's closed-mindedness and the solipsism that shuts him off from duty to others. Early in the novel, we see that Romola and her father, although not down-to-earth cosmopolites, are nevertheless immersed in an international, polyglot literary world: they 'sat among the parchment and the marble, aloof from the life of the streets on holidays as well as on common days'.[28] Tito's tragedy is that, despite his greater engagement with 'the life of the streets', he is a cosmopolite by accident and a wanderer and scholar in the interests of his personal advantage and the extraction of pleasure. His wanderings do not entail an obligation to help others, even his benefactor father.

Tito's view comes to be that the world is instead a stage for youthful pleasure; to journey in search of a man who is well past his prime, enslaved by age as much as by a foreign power, would be pointless:

> And was not his own blooming life a promise of incomparably more pleasure, not for himself only, but for others, than the withered wintry life of a man who was past the time of keen enjoyment, and whose ideas had stiffened into barren rigidity? Those ideas had all been sown in the fresh soil of Tito's

[26] Eliot, *Romola*, 115.
[27] Eliot, *Romola*, 117.
[28] Eliot, *Romola*, 115.

> mind, and were lively germs there: that was the proper order of things—the order of Nature, which treats all maturity as a mere nidus for youth. Baldassarre had done his work, had had his draught of life: Tito said it was *his* turn now.[29]

That Tito's life is enabled by the 'florins' bequeathed to him by Baldassarre is for Tito beside the point: 'in that larger and more radically natural view by which the world belongs to youth and strength', he reasons, 'they were rather his who could extract the most pleasure out of them.'[30]

Tito even extends his disdain for the past to a lack of concern about what posterity will make of him and his work. He denies that history has a purpose: when Nello flatters him, saying 'are you not a pattern of virtue in this wicked city? with your ears double-waxed against all siren invitations that would lure you from the Via de' Bardi, and the great work which is to astonish posterity?', he simply replies, 'Posterity in good truth, whom it will probably astonish as the universe does, by the impossibility of seeing what was the plan of it.'[31] Posterity, or the future's attitude to the present as past, is meaningless for Tito, since nature is a game of chance so impersonal that pleasure is all that anyone should be expected to extract from it. In this, Tito differs from Romola, for whom '[i]t cost me a struggle to act in opposition to my father's feeling'.[32]

Although Tito and Romola are to be married, their differences become evident whenever they interact. In a symbolic reflection of Tito and Romola's different attitudes, Romola, on seeing 'a huge and ghastly image of Winged Time with his scythe and hour-glass, surrounded by his winged children, the Hours' (part of the Florentine Carnival), reacts with 'cold horror'.[33] Tito is unafraid, however, telling Romola '[y]ou will forget this ghastly mummery when we are in the light, and can see each other's eyes. My Ariadne must never look backward now – only forward to Easter, when she will triumph with her Care-dispeller.'[34] This anticipates the scene in *Daniel Deronda* in which Gwendolen looks at an 'opened panel' that 'disclosed the picture of an upturned dead face, from which an obscure figure seemed to be feeling with outstretched arms'; at this, Gwendolen 'shuddered silently' and 'closed [the panel] hastily'.[35] Refusing to countenance the past, Tito will not look back, either, even when he encounters

[29] Eliot, *Romola*, 117.
[30] Eliot, *Romola*, 118.
[31] Eliot, *Romola*, 133-134.
[32] Eliot, *Romola*, 136.
[33] Eliot, *Romola*, 204.
[34] Eliot, *Romola*, 205.
[35] Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 20.

his adoptive father, Baldassarre: he looks forward in order to dispel his own bad memories and because the past is as dead to him as he takes his father to be. There is no place in Tito's scheme of things for reconciliation with people who no longer matter to him. He is a citizen of the world only as long as others' citizenship is not redundant, and death, once registered, is for Tito the redundancy of that citizenship.

In a formal reflection of Tito's historical amnesia, following this episode Eliot begins not only a new chapter (21) but also a new book, the second of three following the standard three-decker format. There is also a time lacuna of over two years between Tito and Romola's encounter with Time at Carnival, and Tito's encounter with his adoptive father, during which time we learn that Romola and Tito have been married. In 1494, Baldassarre is caught up with French prisoners of war trapped in Florence. On escaping the prison during a mass breakout and running to take sanctuary in the Duomo, he encounters Tito:

> But in mounting the steps, his foot received a shock; he was precipitated towards the group of Signori, whose backs were turned to him, and was only able to recover his balance as he clutched one of them by the arm.
>
> It was Tito Melema who felt that clutch. He turned his head, and saw the face of his adoptive father, Baldassarre Calvo, close to his own.
>
> The two men looked at each other, silent as death: Baldassarre, with dark fierceness and a tightening grip of the soiled worn hands on the velvet-clad arm; Tito, with his cheeks and lips all bloodless, fascinated by terror. It seemed a long while to them—it was but a moment.[36]

Tito describes his father to the man he is with as '*Some madman, surely*'[37] (Eliot's emphasis). In this moment, Tito's rejection and distrust of history as the accumulation of past events, facts, and truths, is made absolute: the narrator shortly afterwards describes Tito as having 'no sense that there was strength and safety in truth; the only strength he trusted to [*sic*] lay in his ingenuity and his dissimulation.'[38] Tito is 'silent as death', 'bloodless, fascinated by terror': he seems to be seeing himself at one remove, and he is at a remove also from history itself, represented by his elderly father caught up in the latest political upheaval.

Daniel Deronda's encounter with the elderly man at the Jewish synagogue in Frankfurt (Chapter 32) also dramatizes the connection between personal history and an incipient

[36] Eliot, *Romola*, 221-222.
[37] Eliot, *Romola*, 222.
[38] Eliot, *Romola*, 225.

cosmopolitan worldview. For Deronda, however, unlike Tito, the sense of the past has already been accentuated by the scene before him. Deronda is moved by 'the chant […] the outburst of sweet boys' voices from the little quire […] the devotional swaying of men's bodies […] the very commonness of the building and shabbiness of the scene where a national faith, which had penetrated the thinking of half the world, and moulded the splendid forms of that world's religion, was finding a remote, obscure echo – all were blent for him as one expression of a binding history, tragic and yet glorious. He wondered at the strength of his feeling; it seemed beyond the occasion'.[39] When the service ends, Deronda finds that his feelings are brought back down to earth, as it were, and he resists the claim on his identity made by the elderly man who recognizes him:

> But with the cessation of the devotional sounds and the movement of many indifferent faces and vulgar figures before him there darted into his mind the frigid idea that he had probably been alone in his feeling, and perhaps the only person in the congregation for whom the service was more than a dull routine. There was just time for this chilling thought […] when he felt a hand on his arm, and turning with the rather unpleasant sensation which this abrupt sort of claim is apt to bring, he saw close to him the white-bearded face of that neighbour, who said to him in German, 'Excuse me, young gentleman – allow me – what is your parentage – your mother's family – her maiden name?'
>
> Deronda had a strongly resistant feeling: he was inclined to shake off hastily the touch on his arm; but he managed to slip it away and said coldly, 'I am an Englishman.'[40]

Whereas Tito is actually dismissive of the man he recognizes as his adoptive father, Deronda at least gives his questioner, whom he does not recognize, an answer, albeit one that is reductive in its self-distancing from the scene that has just moved him to a feeling verging on identification. Deronda's cosmopolitanism is unconscious and incipient at this point, whereas Tito's, in an analogous situation, lapses into cynicism and a cold unresponsiveness to the fate of others.

iii. 'Deep below all blandness and beseechingness': Tito's worldly cynicism

In Book 3, Tito changes, becoming less talkative, more cynical, and in a political sense more worldly. In his sale of Romola's father's library and collection of antiquities against Romola's wishes, Tito rejects the history that might otherwise save him from total self-centredness and from an untethered and ahistorical cosmopolitanism. Although at first glance

[39] Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 339.
[40] Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 340.

it is Tito and not Romola who acts in the interests of a wider world by dispersing her father's library – Romola admits, 'I am not thinking of other Italian cities and the whole civilised world—I am thinking of my father, and of my love and sorrow for him'[41] – Tito's motivation for the dispersal is actually self-interested, and at odds with any notion of the books' universal historical importance. His mercenary decision to sell is propped up by the uncertain conviction that the books, left in Florence under the threat of French invasion, would be vulnerable to physical destruction:

> […] I have arranged [he says] for the transfer, both of the books and of the antiquities, where they will find the highest use and value. The books have been bought for the Duke of Milan, the marbles and bronzes and the rest are going to France: and both will be protected by the stability of a great Power, instead of remaining in a city which is exposed to ruin.[42]

Tito, ostensibly utilitarian, is actually pragmatic in a way that furthers his own interests and indeed feathers his own nest, except that he has now betrayed Romola's trust and significantly altered her view of him. He wants the books to be dispersed rather than preserved in Florence under the auspices of the Bardi family, and this dispersal is another symbol of his prioritizing of geography and its present-day political ramifications over the past and personal relations. Tito's cosmopolitanism takes no account of the past and its inextricability from the present, nor of history and its inextricability from geography.

Eliot's sense of the circularity of history, which I mentioned earlier, is implicit in her characterization of Tito and Romola's relationship, in which the past, once Tito's betrayal has become known to Romola, always hovers in the background as something unspeakable, even as Romola has managed superficially to escape his clutches:

> The silence had been so complete, that Tito was ignorant of her having fled from him and come back again; they had never approached an avowal of that past which, both in its young love and in the shock that shattered the love, lay locked away from them like a banquet-room where death had once broken the feast. […] Tito himself felt that a crisis was come in his married life. The husband's determination to mastery, which lay deep below all blandness and beseechingness, had risen permanently to the surface now, and seemed to alter his face, as a face is altered by a hidden muscular tension which a man is secretly throttling or stamping out the life from something feeble, yet dangerous.[43]

This is comparable to Jacques Derrida's famous argument about the metaphysics of presence, in which 'from the moment that presence, holding or announcing itself to itself, fissures its

[41] Eliot, *Romola*, 290.
[42] Eliot, *Romola*, 291.
[43] Eliot, *Romola*, 415.

plenitude and starts the chain of history, death's work has begun.'[44] History – and so death – begins where consciousness of crisis looms; both parties, Tito and Romola, repress the shock of the dissolution of their marital harmony, and Eliot's simile of death breaking into the feast foreshadows the death that meets Tito as he renounces all connection with the past both recent and remote.

The word 'beseechingness', furthermore, is Eliot's neologism.[45] As a new word, it captures the quality that Tito must disregard in order to reassert his authority and integrity. He is stamping out the hope of repairing things with Romola, and replacing it with a renewed vigour, a determination to control both her and, more crucially, himself. History, for Eliot, hangs in the balance at such moments: one can either dwell on one's bad luck, or one can adapt. As Tito says to Romola, opportunistically but also profoundly:

> You have changed towards me; it has followed that I have changed towards you. It is useless to take any retrospect. We have simply to adapt ourselves to altered conditions.[46]

Eliot's degree of sympathy for Tito at this juncture is obscure (Romola replies that 'it is not true that I changed first. You changed towards me the night you first wore that chain armour'[47]). Romola 'had ceased to belong to the desirable furniture of [Tito's] life: there was no possibility of an easy relation between them without genuineness on his part. Genuineness implied confession of the past, and confession involved a change of purpose.'[48] He was 'not at ease. The world was not quite cushioned with velvet'.[49]

At this point, there is a neat cleavage between the narrator's apparent omniscience and Tito's inscrutability. Tito is most sympathetic where he acknowledges the limits of knowledge. Rae Greiner claims that Eliot 'shares her worry with Joseph Conrad and Henry James not only that omniscience prohibits sympathy but also that sympathy is diminished by the requirement that we strongly identify with, or know, the sentiments of others.'[50] Sympathy can exist without our identification or knowledge of the other person, and in *Romola* Eliot makes her central character, Tito, more sympathetic because we cannot know him. Although he is a

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[44] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, introduction by Judith Butler (40th anniversary edition) (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 337.
[45] "beseechingness, n.". OED Online. June 2020. Oxford University Press. https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2446/view/Entry/18036?redirectedFrom=beseechingness (accessed June 19, 2020).
[46] Eliot, *Romola*, 418.
[47] Eliot, *Romola*, 418.
[48] Eliot, *Romola*, 420.
[49] Eliot, *Romola*, 420.
[50] Rae Greiner, *Sympathetic Realism in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 125.

villain, he is redeemed sympathetically by his final unknowability. Eliot's worry about the contradiction between omniscience and true sympathy is already implicit in *The Mill on the Floss*, in which the narrator urges us not 'to repress all the divine promptings and inspirations that spring from growing insight and sympathy,' but adds that such 'insight' must itself come from 'a life vivid and intense enough to have created a wide fellow-feeling with all that is human.'[51] Vividness and intensity of life, rather than an affected godlike omniscience, are the wellspring of sympathy and fellow-feeling, but sympathy is also diminished, as Greiner observes, by too great an emphasis on the obligation to *know* others. Knowledge of others is distinct from sympathy with others, and in *Romola* sympathy is nearer than knowledge to cosmopolitanism as a citizenship of the world, since sympathy accepts that the world is not cushioned with velvet.

History, for Tito, is dispensable where geography is not, and Eliot's narrative intervention in his shifting conscience functions partly as a means by which the historical novel turns on questions of loyalty to 'the world' conceived as a whole, rather than to any party or person. Thus, Tito is a new kind of character in the English historical novel, someone who appeals both to conscience but also to the intellect – Romola's, Eliot's, and the reader's. He 'believed that he had mastered Romola by a terror which appealed to the strongest forces of her nature. He had alarmed her affection and her conscience by the shadowy image of consequences; he had arrested her intellect by hanging before it the idea of a hopeless complexity in affairs, which defied any moral judgement.'[52] Moral judgement here means the deferral of moral judgement: Tito escapes morality just as he escapes being the central consciousness or point of view in the novel; although by no means marginal, he is an escape artist, and his cosmopolitanism, in disregarding the sense of the past, makes him both a fascinating and tantalising character and at the same time as inadequate a prophet as Savonarola.

Tito is a cynic, but also an idealist; a sceptic about the past, but also hopeful about the future: 'Well! a little patience, and in another year, or perhaps in half a year, he might turn his back on these hard, eager Florentines, with their futile quarrels and sinking fortunes. […] But as Tito galloped with a loose rein towards Siena, he saw a future before him in which he would no longer be haunted by those mistakes.'[53] Tito represents Eliot's transition from 1850s cynicism to 1870s cosmopolitan idealism; although Tito is not Eliot's mouthpiece, his

[51] Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, 438.
[52] Eliot, *Romola*, 420.
[53] Eliot, *Romola*, 483.

cosmopolitanism is something necessary yet insufficient to his worldliness and his integrity as a character. Just as Leavis complained that the first half of *Daniel Deronda* should have been called *Gwendolen Harleth*,[54] the first half of *Romola* could well be called *Tito Melema* (Brian Hamnett imagines Eliot rewriting the novel completely under this name).[55] If this presupposes Tito's centrality, it does not do so at the expense of Romola, through whose vision Tito's cosmopolitan suaveness seems less and less to justify his actions.

Early in the text, the narrator says that '[t]he Tuscan mind slipped from the devout to the burlesque, as readily as water round an angle'.[56] This anticipates the element of bathos which runs through *Romola,* and which operates as a kind of cosmopolitan language: a language of world-citizenship both at the level of the text and in the action the text denotes. Eliot's bathos – the exhibition of anti-climax – deconstructs the idea of history by demonstrating how a *consciousness* of history, rather than dramatized historical 'events', sustains cosmopolitanism as a viable (and ineffaceable) force in individual lives. Formally, bathos is a recurring feature of the text which also serves to reinforce character by a process of comic distancing. It balances the disparate elements in human psychology and creates an equilibrium between action and commentary in the realist novel form particular to Eliot. As a *leitmotif* and as a formal component, bathos in *Romola* performs a carnivalesque function of at once calming and unsettling both the individual's nerves and his or her sense of external order (carnivals, like bathos, express their own kind of order as well as subverting whatever social 'order' is conventional). The public, out-of-doors scenes in *Romola* – such episodes as 'The Florentine Joke' (Chapter 16), Savonarola's sermon inside the Duomo (Chapter 24), the bonfire of Vanities (Chapter 49), and the trial by fire (Chapter 65) – are all bathetic, in the sense that they display bathos. The action of the scenes themselves, and not only the language describing them, is bathetic: as Keston Sutherland points out, '*Bathos* […] is possible not only in language, but in any undertaking.'[57] Eliot's set-piece scenes in *Romola* are what Sutherland, citing texts by Alexander Pope (who popularized the term *bathos*), as well as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, calls 'production[s] of bathos in language […] productions of stupidity for public view.'[58]

[54] Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, 122.
[55] Hamnett, *The Historical Novel in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, 200.
[56] Eliot, *Romola*, 83.
[57] Sutherland, 'What is Bathos?', 15.
[58] Sutherland, 'What is Bathos?', 22.

Although Tito is not stupid, he is still subject to 'productions of stupidity'. Describing the customary deed of being shaved, a descent from the sublime to the ridiculous posturing of Florentine men, the narrator declares:

> It is not a sublime attitude for a man, to sit with lathered chin thrown backward, and have his nose made a handle of; but to be shaved was a fashion of Florentine respectability, and it is astonishing how gravely men look at each other when they are all in the fashion.[59]

If it is not 'sublime', it is instead ridiculous. Yet such ridiculousness is not only a question of acts or postures, but also of words. Nello the barber, through whose 'flirtatious, campy presence […] Eliot seems to code Tito's implied homosexual involvements' (as Nancy Henry suggests),[60] offers a running commentary on Tito's arresting appearance. This distances us from Tito's psychology as much as it dwells on his looks, as if shielding us (for the moment) from Tito's insidiousness. His description of Tito's hair as 'hyacinthine locks',[61] suggesting Hyacinth in Greek mythology, the handsome Spartan youth who was Apollo's lover, is already a ridiculous comparison in its ignorance of Tito's evidently far from innocent character. Tito can be self-mocking – 'Under the inspection of a patron whose vision has grown somewhat dim, I shall have a perilous resemblance to a maiden of eighteen in the disguise of a hose and jerkin'[62] – but this only invites further comment that teases Tito and leaves the reader uncertain of what is to be believed about him. In such a comment as Nello's 'I almost advise you to retain the faded jerkin and hose a little longer; they give you the air of a fallen prince',[63] part of the humour derives from the barber's sly acknowledgement of the likely difference between appearance and reality, between expectation and action, over and above Tito's affected self-mockery. Nello beats Tito at his own game; he is the wit who diagnoses bathos in what he sees every day.

Almost killed by drowning in the Arno, Tito is finished off by Baldassarre, who strangles him; Baldassarre himself dies from the exertion of strangling Tito. Amazingly, what Tito fears in his last conscious moments is not so much death as the possibility that this vision of his father's face, the embodiment of his past, might already be a kind of punishment in the afterlife:

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[59] Eliot, *Romola*, 166.
[60] Nancy Henry, 'The Romola Code: "Men of Appetites" in George Eliot's Historical Novel', *Victorian Literature and Culture* 39 (2011), 327-348 (331).
[61] Eliot, *Romola*, 30.
[62] Eliot, *Romola*, 35.
[63] Eliot, *Romola*, 35.

> Tito knew him; but he did not know whether it was life or death that had brought him into the presence of his injured father. It might be death – and death might mean this chill gloom with the face of the hideous past hanging over him for ever.[64]

One thing the historical novel has the unique freedom to do – and it differs in this sense even from the 'purple prose' historical sketches of Eliot's near-contemporaries John Addington Symonds and Walter Pater – is to portray in detail events without witnesses. Eliot can portray unrecorded events with impunity, creating a space in which unobserved deaths, the detritus of history, are explained and given meaning. History on its own cannot be equated with sympathy, because although history in the truest sense is individual experience in all its ephemeral richness, most such experience is never witnessed, corroborated or recorded; history for the most part is a dearth of sympathy, and a brief *precis* of events can have a coldness that is satisfying in its simultaneous detachment and directness.

'The hours went on, and no witness came'[65] is a metaphor for the flexibility of the historical novel in getting imaginatively beneath the annals of history to the motives that bind them together. When witnesses do come, Tito's face is hidden, and only Baldassarre's is visible enough to be recognized:

> No one knew the bodies for a long while, for the aged face had fallen forward, half hiding the younger. But before they had been moved out of sight, they had been recognized.
>
> 'I know that old man,' Piero di Cosimo had testified. 'I painted his likeness once. He is the prisoner who clutched Melema on the steps of the Duomo.'
>
> 'He is perhaps the same old man who appeared at supper in my gardens,' said Bernardo Rucellai, one of the Eight. 'I had forgotten him. I thought he had died in prison. But there is no knowing the truth now.'
>
> Who shall put his finger on the work of Justice, and say, 'It is there'? Justice is like the Kingdom of God—it is not without us as a fact, it is within us as a great yearning.[66]

Tito's fate, that of a spurious cosmopolite killed by the past he disowns and unnoticed by posterity, is not only the return of the repressed, but also an indictment of his cosmopolitanism that lacks a sense of the past. The 'great yearning' of justice reads as Eliot's confession of an idealist cosmopolitanism inside us all, whether we are yearning consciously or not: citizenship of the world is in Eliot's vision a hermeneutic rather than an empirical truth, something that Tito fails to see.

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[64] Eliot, *Romola*, 548
[65] Eliot, *Romola*, 548.
[66] Eliot, *Romola*, 555-556.

Ultimately, '[t]he result [Tito] most cared for was the securing of a future position for himself at Rome or at Milan, for he had a growing determination, when the favourable moment should come, to quit Florence for one of those great capitals where life was easier, and the rewards of talent and learning were more splendid.'[67] The Italian states' rivalries are part of Tito's means of self-advancement. By contrast, Savonarola in his cell, contemplating his forthcoming trial by fire, finds that 'his mind was filled with the images of results to be felt through all Europe; and the sense of immediate difficulties was being lost in the glow of that vision'.[68] At that very moment Tito enters Savonarola's cell, and their conversation reveals their different interpretations of the cosmopolitan potential of their respective predicaments. Savonarola still hopes to write 'a letter to the French king himself […] a letter calling on the king to assist in summoning a Great Council, that might reform the abuses of the Church, and begin by deposing Pope Alexander, who was not rightfully Pope, being a vicious unbeliever, elected by corruption and governing by simony.'[69] Both men still have their ambitions for the future, and both are animated by a vision of life beyond Florence.

Tito tells Savonarola, 'I have mistaken my real vocation in forsaking the career of pure letters, for which I was brought up. The politics of Florence, father, are worthy to occupy the greatest mind—to occupy yours—when a man is in a position to execute his own ideas; but when, like me, he can only hope to be the mere instrument of changing schemes, he requires to be animated by the minor attachments of a born Florentine'.[70] Telling Savonarola that he has decided 'to leave Florence, to visit the chief courts of Europe',[71] Tito in fact continues his clandestine involvement in Italian politics, which is the death of him: before he lapses into unconsciousness in the Arno, he still hopes to swim to safety: 'Life was still before him.'[72] Eliot consciously echoes Milton's depiction of Adam and Eve exiled from Paradise: 'The world was all before them'.[73] Tito remains someone worldly, a cosmopolite, to the very end, but one heedlessly aloof from the concerns of the people who run after him and target him as a member of the political elite; a 'stranger in Florence', but one dependent on the tides of Florentine history that he affects to ignore.

iv. 'Thou, O Italy, art the chosen land': Savonarola inside the Duomo

[67] Eliot, *Romola*, 479.
[68] Eliot, *Romola*, 533.
[69] Eliot, *Romola*, 534.
[70] Eliot, *Romola*, 535.
[71] Eliot, *Romola*, 535.
[72] Eliot, *Romola*, 553.
[73] John Milton, *The Major Works*, edited with an introduction and notes by Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 618.

A similar fate to Tito's awaits Savonarola in *Romola*; indeed, the scene of Tito's death immediately gives way to an image of Savonarola imprisoned and under torture:

> Not long after those two bodies were lying in the grass, Savonarola was being tortured and crying out in his agony, 'I will confess!'[74]

This switch not only emphasizes the link between Tito and Savonarola as doomed characters: the past imperfect also gives a sense of open-endedness, something that the historical novel allows. 'I will confess!' points to Savonarola's historical ambiguity (what has he exactly to confess?), but it also typifies his habit of deferring the do-or-die climax, the 'things [that] will come quickly' but that rely on what the narrator calls 'the false certitude which gave his sermons the interest of a political bulletin'.[75]

Savonarola is first named in the 'Proem': the spirit had listened to him preach just before his death. Implicit in Eliot's description is Savonarola's wide but ambiguous appeal:

> That very Quaresima or Lent of 1492 in which he died, still in his erect old age, he had listened in San Lorenzo, not without a mixture of satisfaction, to the preaching of a Dominican Friar, named Girolamo Savonarola, who denounced with a rare boldness the worldliness and vicious habits of the clergy, and insisted on the duty of Christian men not to live for their own ease when wrong was triumphing in high places, and not to spend their wealth in outward pomp even in the churches, when their fellow-citizens were suffering from want and sickness. The *Frate* carried his doctrine rather too far for elderly ears; yet it was a memorable thing to see a preacher move his audience to such a pitch that the women even took off their ornaments, and delivered them up to be sold for the benefit of the needy.[76]

This description illustrates the different, opposing versions of cosmopolitanism that Savonarola will ultimately fail to propagate among the Florentines to whom he preaches. On the one hand, Savonarola is opposed to 'worldliness', an ambiguous word that can mean both materialism and general experience. He is therefore opposed to a *faux*-cosmopolitanism of the international clergy. On the other hand, he exhorts 'Christian men' to tend to 'their fellow-citizens': this could mean Florentines, but also Christians more generally, and even – by its most liberal and cosmopolitan definition – mankind as a whole. The 'mixture of satisfaction' that the spirit of the 'Proem' feels on hearing Savonarola preach is attributable to this sense of concentric circles of obligation, which move away from the 'high places' of selfish detachment and towards on-the-ground material aid. That Savonarola 'carried his

[74] Eliot, *Romola*, 555.
[75] Eliot, *Romola*, 238.
[76] Eliot, *Romola*, 8.

doctrine rather too far for elderly ears' already implies a certain disregard for the past on Savonarola's part; uninterested in the old, he is a reformer of the young and a prophet of the future. One kind of cosmopolitan worldliness – the potential reform of the universal Christian church – replaces another kind confined merely to the clerical-aristocratic elite. Savonarola will evoke 'a mixture of satisfaction' in the course of the novel, and that 'mixture of satisfaction' – Eliot hints at a lurking, intractable dissatisfaction – sows the seeds of his downfall.

Savonarola is therefore presented as sympathetic, but Eliot's vocabulary also imputes to him a fanaticism that excludes the elderly, precludes the accumulation of personal wealth except where this is offered up for charitable use, and has no place for the past. Savonarola represents, unconsciously, the cosmopolitan potential of religious reformation, a kind of world-citizenship of souls: in addressing his country ('thou, O Italy, art the chosen land'[77]) in his Easter sermon, he ostensibly zones Italy off from the rest of the world, but also implies that a wider reformation will emanate from its example. Whereas in a biblical sense, Savonarola is a Historicist (with a capital 'H'), finding in the Bible prophecies about the entire history of the church, in a secular sense, he is vehemently anti-historicist. He represents the provincialism (in a derogatory sense) of an anti-historicism that is the opposite of the more enterprising and at the same time history-valuing side of the Italian Renaissance, exemplified by the Florentine elite dining in the Rucellai Gardens (Chapter 39). Savonarola's desire to unite the world's people in the Christian message is idealistically cosmopolitan, but this ambition is inextricable from a religious fanaticism that is antithetical to the secular historicist spirit of the Renaissance and the liberal will of the people.

Savonarola the Dominican friar-turned-preacher provincializes, rather than cosmopolitanizes, Christianity, firstly by his mock-humble assertion that God's 'word possesses me so that I am but as the branch of the forest when the wind of heaven penetrates it',[78] and secondly by his metaphorical reduction of God's vengeance to a kind of morality-play stage-set on the very site of his own preaching: 'Behold! the ministers of [God's] wrath are upon thee—they are at thy very doors!'[79] For Eliot, the Reverend Dr John Cumming, an evangelical Church of Scotland clergyman popular in London during the 1850s, was the modern-day embodiment of these negative aspects of Savonarola. Eliot lampooned Cumming in an 1855 essay as one

[77] Eliot, *Romola*, 229.
[78] Eliot, *Romola*, 229.
[79] Eliot, *Romola*, 229.

who ‘set [himself] up as an interpreter of prophecy’ and a ‘rival to Moore’s Almanack in the prediction of political events […] In this way he may gain a metropolitan pulpit; the avenues to his church will be as crowded as the passages to the opera; he has but to print his prophetic sermons and bind them in lilac and gold, and they will adorn the drawing-room table of all evangelical ladies’.[80] Whereas Savonarola is presented as popular and populist, however, Cumming is presented as appealing to the superficiality of a metropolitan elite: the opera, drawing-rooms and lilac and gold bindings all suggest the kind of frippery Savonarola condemns in his Bonfire of the Vanities.

Savonarola’s first direct appearance in the novel, when Romola encounters him at the Dominican priory of San Marco where her brother is dying (Chapter 15), echoes Baldassarre’s encounter with Tito outside the Duomo: Romola ‘heard the voice of Fra Girolamo saying, in a low tone, “Our brother is departed;” she felt a hand laid on her arm. The next moment the door was opened, and she was out in the wide piazza of San Marco […]’.[81] The arm may not necessarily be Savonarola’s: but if we imagine it is, his tactility anticipates the directness of his public message, which occurs in his 1494 Easter Sermon in the Duomo (Chapter 24). This comes shortly after Baldassarre’s momentary encounter with Tito, and it is no coincidence that Savonarola gives public, dogmatic expression to Tito’s own vociferous rejection of history. ‘The day of vengeance is at hand!’,[82] the first words Baldassarre hears, are resolutely presentist; the metaphor is tactile, and the sense of imminent change is performed by the utterance itself, as sound breaks through the silent weight of history.

There is something spellbinding about the sound of Savonarola’s voice: on hearing him, though he cannot see him clearly, ‘Baldassarre quivered and looked up.’[83] Savonarola uses familiar biblical language to appeal to the emotions:

> The cup of your iniquity is full. Behold, the thunder of the Lord is gathering, and it shall fall and break the cup, and your iniquity, which seems to you as pleasant wine, shall be poured out upon you, and shall be as molten lead. And you, O priests, who say, Ha, ha! there is no Presence in the sanctuary—the Shechinah is nought—the Mercy-seat is bare; we may sin behind the veil, and who shall punish us? To you, I said, the presence of God shall be revealed in his temple as a consuming fire, and your sacred garments shall become a winding-sheet of flame, and for sweet music there shall be shrieks and

[80] Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 38-39.
[81] Eliot, *Romola*, 163.
[82] Eliot, *Romola*, 228.
[83] Eliot, *Romola*, 228.

> hissing, and for soft couches there shall be thorns, and for the breath of wantons shall come the pestilence.[84]

The past hardly exists in Savonarola's vision of reformation, except where he cross-references what he claims has been divinely revealed to him.

Savonarola also answers his hypothetical critics, resulting in sermons-within-a-sermon:

> And for four years I have preached […] three things, which the Lord has delivered to me: that *in these times God will regenerate His Church,* and that *before the regeneration must come the scourge over all Italy*, and that *these things will come quickly* [Eliot's emphasis]. But hypocrites who cloak their hatred of the truth with a show of love have said to me, 'Come now, Frate, leave your prophesyings: it is enough to teach virtue.' To these I answer: 'Yes, you say in your hearts, God lives afar off […] But […] God is near and not afar off; his judgements change not. […] And thou, Italy, art the chosen land: has not God placed his sanctuary within thee, and thou has polluted it? Behold! the ministers of his wrath are upon thee—they are at thy very doors!'[85]

For Savonarola, God is metaphysically 'near', imminent as well as immanent.[86] Savonarola anticipates criticism, and Eliot's direct speech at this point has the effect of incorporating all counter-arguments against Savonarola within the same passage: he silences his critics by a process of quoting their own criticisms back at them.

Partly for this reason, Savonarola's appeal to his audience is emotional rather than intellectual or theoretical. Just as in *Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe* (1861), Silas remembers his experiences of outdoor Calvinist sermons in Lantern Yard, 'where first one well known person and then another […] uttered phrases at once occult and familiar, like the amulet worn on the heart',[87] so in Savonarola's speech '[e]very changing tone, vibrating through the audience, shook them into answering emotion.'[88] Savonarola causes the congregation to be 'carried along by the great wave of feeling which gathered its force from sympathies that lay deeper than all theory.'[89] He enables individuals to feel that they are part of a whole without losing the force of their individuality: Eliot uses words such as 'vibrating', 'shook', and 'carried' to designate this simultaneous assimilation and individuality. In the case of

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[84] Eliot, *Romola*, 228.
[85] Eliot, *Romola*, 229.
[86] Frank Kermode famously writes, of the human need for stories to explain our place in time, '[n]o longer imminent, the End is immanent' (*The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, 2nd edition with a new preface [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 25).
[87] George Eliot, *Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe* [1861], edited with an introduction and notes by Juliette Atkinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 13.
[88] Eliot, *Romola*, 232.
[89] Eliot, *Romola*, 232.

Baldassarre, the narrator tells us, '[i]n that great sob of the multitude Baldassarre's had mingled.'[90] Paradoxically, Savonarola's persuasiveness depends less on past or present misdeeds than on the image of 'a future into which the hated sinner might be pursued and held by the avenger in an eternal grapple'.[91] For the purposes of his sermon, the world is united, for Savonarola, by the image of a perpetual future, as though sin itself must be indefinitely deferred rather than actually banished. He thus keeps his audience in suspense; but this is a ruse, for he is actually presentist and self-serving, personally motivated by the here and now.

The audience's response to Savonarola must be distinguished from Eliot's view of him as built into the novel. At the end of Chapter 25, the narrator, in a moment of candid departure from Savonarola as a fictionalized character, freely analyses the causes of his three years of popular success:

> Perhaps, while no preacher ever had a more massive influence than Savonarola, no preacher ever had more heterogeneous materials to work upon. And one secret of the massive influence lay in the highly mixed character of his preaching.[92]

If history is written by the victors, Eliot, while acknowledging Savonarola's influence, is still, inevitably, on the victors' side. Savonarola's attempted (and aborted) religious reformation is characterized in *Romola* by what James Simpson attributes to the English Protestant Reformation as one possible, anti-Whiggish account of that more successful religious movement, namely 'an exclusivist, invisible, ahistorical Church of the pure; […] stringent insistence on the inerrancy of scripture; […] destructive iconoclasm; […] initial political quietism – even in the face of tyranny.'[93] John Addington Symonds, in the first of his seven-volume *Renaissance in Italy* (1875-86), tellingly subtitled *The Age of the Despots*, called Savonarola 'the Prophet of the Renaissance', who 'rose upon the wings of faith to the belief that a new age would dawn'.[94] Nevertheless, the narrator in *Romola* points out that '[n]o man ever struggled to retain power over a mixed multitude without suffering vitiation: his standard must be their lower needs, and not his best insight.'[95] Savonarola's cosmopolitan

[90] Eliot, *Romola*, 232.
[91] Eliot, *Romola*, 232.
[92] Eliot, *Romola*, 237.
[93] James Simpson, *Permanent Revolution: The Reformation and the Illiberal Roots of Liberalism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019), 1.
[94] John Addington Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy: The Age of the Despots* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1875), 446.
[95] Eliot, *Romola*, 238.

potential is stunted by its overreliance on emotion: consequently, his message does not last long beyond the vibrations of his speech.

v. 'The sense of citizenship': Savonarola outside the Duomo

Symonds grandly claimed that with Savonarola's ascendancy, 'politicians no less than mystics felt that a new chapter had been opened in the book of the world's history.'[96] But *Romola* implies, rather, that he is someone sealed off from history: symbolically, he speaks 'Inside the Duomo' (Chapter 25), literally sheltered from the life of the streets and the living history 'Outside the Duomo' (Chapter 26). If Savonarola is seen directly inside the Duomo, elsewhere in the novel he is only seen indirectly as perceived by others; at these points, his message is not always clear or attractive to those who interpret him. Chapter 39 (the Rucellai Gardens) exemplifies this aspect of Eliot's narrative technique. It also illustrates the political implications of Savonarola's reformism. For the male Florentine elite dining in the Rucellai Gardens during the height of Savonarola's popularity, '[t]he sense of citizenship was just then strongly forced even on the most indifferent minds.'[97] This begs the question of what this 'sense of citizenship' means.

The diners' sense of belonging to Florence, as citizens of the Florentine Republic, contrasts with the version of citizenship they attribute to Savonarola, namely a popular commonwealth. Such an idea, expressed by one of the diners, Tornabuoni, is reminiscent for Eliot and the Victorian reader of Puritan England under Oliver Cromwell:

> This theory of the Frate's, that we are to have a popular government, in which every man is to strive only for the general good, and know no party names, is a theory that may do for some isle of Cristoforo Colombo's finding, but will never do for our fine old quarrelsome Florence.[98]

Although Savonarola is not utopian in this socio-political sense – he simply believes that 'a scourge was about to descend on Italy, and that by this scourge the Church was to be purified'[99] – nevertheless, the discovery of the New World remains an obvious and powerful symbol of the possibility of beginning government and morality afresh. History is in one sense the opposite of nature, and Savonarola is a believer in nature, which he equates with human sin and the obligation to repent, before he is any kind of historian.

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[96] Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy: The Age of the Despots*, 447.
[97] Eliot, *Romola*, 346.
[98] Eliot, *Romola*, 349.
[99] Eliot, *Romola*, 209.

The only allowable history, for Savonarola, is biblical, and biblical history is really prophecy, so that 'in the Sacred Book there was a record of the past [Eliot uses free indirect speech] in which might be seen as in a glass what would be in days to come'.[100] Similarly, for Savonarola there is no such thing as citizenship of the world where the world is too debased for such a model of citizenship. Cosmopolitanism for Savonarola depends upon the reclamation of the Church as governing body and leavening agent, so that he is left rhetorically asking, by a process of deduction, 'unless the Church were reclaimed, how could the promises be fulfilled, that the heathens should be converted and the whole world become subject to the one true law?'[101] For the Florentines, however, there is something admirable about human debate and diversity of opinion, hence the hearty appeal to 'fine old quarrelsome Florence' in the Rucellai Gardens. History for the present's sake, for the Florentines, replaces Savonarola's history for the future's sake.

In public, Savonarola asks 'my witness to be remembered among men, that iniquity shall not prosper for ever.'[102] But it is on the basis of the existence of iniquity that Savonarola's voice keeps his audience captive: like the Church, he is reliant on the existence of the sinfulness he claims to castigate. In short, he has vested interests, namely power and adulation. '[H]aving once held that audience in his mastery,' the narrator declares, 'it was necessary to his nature—it was necessary for their welfare—that he should *keep* the mastery.'[103] Eliot claimed that Savonarola's sermon in Chapter 24 'is not a translation, but a free representation of Fra Girolamo's preaching in its more impassioned moments'.[104] Nevertheless, Savonarola's conversation with Romola in Chapter 40 remains startling because by turning Savonarola from a mystical preacher into a private, conversant individual, it collapses more emphatically the boundary between fact and fiction implicit in the novel thus far. Romola herself sees Savonarola in a different light: the 'impression' he makes is 'new to her', something startling and disconcerting.[105] In direct contradiction to the impression created by his sermons, 'there was nothing transcendent in Savonarola's face. It was not beautiful.'[106]

Not only is Savonarola no longer transcendent: he is no longer implicitly cosmopolitan. Indeed, when Savonarola has a private conversation with Romola, he is explicitly anti-

[100] Eliot, *Romola*, 211.
[101] Eliot, *Romola*, 211.
[102] Eliot, *Romola*, 232.
[103] Eliot, *Romola*, 238.
[104] George Eliot, *Romola*, edited with an introduction [and notes] by Dorothea Barrett (London: Penguin, 2005), 611 (note).
[105] Eliot, *Romola*, 361.
[106] Eliot, *Romola*, 361.

cosmopolitan, repudiating the notion of a world-citizenship of souls implicit in his sermon. Having urged Romola not to break her marriage vow by leaving Florence, and having emphasized 'the simplest law that lies at the foundation of the trust which binds man to man—faithfulness to the spoken word',[107] he then accuses her:

> And to break that pledge you fly from Florence: Florence, where there are the only men and women in the world to whom you owe the debt of a fellow-citizen.[108]

Romola replies by reminding Savonarola that she 'should never have quitted Florence' […] 'as long as there was any hope of my fulfilling a duty to my father there.'[109] But Savonarola then speaks of 'the mighty purpose that God has for Florence' from which he accuses Romola of escaping.[110] He therefore contradicts the cosmopolitanism implicit in his sermon: Florence may have a peculiar destiny to set an example to the rest of the world, but Florentines have no obligation to the rest of the world or reason to consider themselves world-citizens. Neither the world outside Florence nor Romola's family ties matter as much as her obligations to the city, which, under siege, is shut off from rather than microcosmic of the world: Romola must '[l]ive for Florence—for your own people, whom God is preparing to bless the earth.'[111] Savonarola eventually wins the psychological argument, persuading Romola to stay, to the extent that 'feeling would no longer pass through the channel of speech, and he was silent.'[112] Once his power is renewed, over a single person or over a multitude, he has nothing more to say. Eliot introduces this private face of Savonarola at just the point where it is least expected: Savonarola's mask slips, and the directness of his accusation digs a furrow in the narrative with a force that is all the more ironic given that, in a wider narrative sense, it is the fictional Romola who is imposed onto the historical canvas. Eliot reverses the roles, and this has the uncanny effect of making Savonarola seem more plausible at those moments where he is brought down from the pulpit, and from his self-mythology, to participate directly in Eliot's fictional narrative.

The Rucellai Gardens scene illustrates several further paradoxes about the meaning of Savonarola's place in Florence. He is noticeably absent: he therefore becomes an example of what Isobel Armstrong calls the 'deficit subject, the subject that falls outside accounts of the

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[107] Eliot, *Romola*, 362.
[108] Eliot, *Romola*, 362-363.
[109] Eliot, *Romola*, 363.
[110] Eliot, *Romola*, 363.
[111] Eliot, *Romola*, 367.
[112] Eliot, *Romola*, 367.

fully human' in nineteenth-century fiction.[113] Armstrong claims that 'the marginal spaces of dispossession, crucial for the poetics of space in high fiction and which the deficit subject inhabits, are less obtrusive in the texts of non-hegemonic novels' (by 'non-hegemonic novels' she seems to mean novels unconcerned with London and the political classes).[114] The centre of Florence's political power in *Romola* is actually suburban and private: a *mise en scène* removed from the Piazza della Signoria. Paradoxically, Savonarola's absence decentres him in spite of his popularity being at its height at that very moment. In Eliot's vision of the Florentine elite there also exists what Linda Dowling identifies in the Victorian period as the idea that Aestheticism, which by shutting art off from the world seemingly 'reveals its truest nature as a denial or retreat from history', nevertheless 'might possess a grand power of social redemption'; Dowling calls this 'the paradox of aesthetic democracy'.[115] Tito, from whose point of view we see the scene, 'soon discerned […] that the object of the gathering was political, though, perhaps, nothing more distinct than that strengthening of party which comes from good fellowship.'[116] The 'talk', however, is actually 'the lightest in the world', aesthetically preoccupied by 'silver forks on the table' as much as by politics.[117] The company seems unsure what kind of revolution they want, or what kind of citizenship they embody, but they 'agreed on all hands that the habits of posterity would be very surprising to ancestors, if ancestors could only know them.'[118]

If timeless emotion is substituted for timeless art, Savonarola's vision of democracy casts him in the same light as Victorian aesthetic democrats for whom timeless art, paradoxically, possessed the power of social change. Savonarola's exclusion from the political discussion in Chapter 39 also situates him outside Florentine power-politics even at the height of his hegemonic populist power. He exists outside politics, just as he rejects history; but his popular vision of social redemption excludes him from the newly historicist – because historically curious – Florentine elite. What prevents Savonarola from becoming a rounded character, then, is his rhetorical one-sidedness; quarrel and dialogue begin only when his sermons end, and his views are questioned by characters who sense in the very act of their

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[113] Isobel Armstrong, *Novel Politics: Democratic Imaginations in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 7. Armstrong cites as an example of the 'deficit subject' the character of Arthur Morton in Thomas Martin Wheeler's novel, *Sunshine and Shadow: A Tale of the Nineteenth Century* (1849), calling Morton 'a working class cosmopolitan' (*Novel Politics*, 259).
[114] Armstrong, *Novel Politics*, 259.
[115] Linda Dowling, *The Vulgarization of Art: The Victorians and Aesthetic Democracy* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1996), ix, xii.
[116] Eliot, *Romola*, 343.
[117] Eliot, *Romola*, 344.
[118] Eliot, *Romola*, 344.

questioning the historic core of their identity as a civic body that distinguishes them morally from Savonarola. For Savonarola, social change begins where history ends: that is, with himself and his emotional appeals. The supper at the Rucellai Gardens therefore dramatizes Eliot's idea that only a sense of history can weld together the dispossessed and the hegemonic characters, the outsiders and the insiders. Savonarola fails to recognize this, and his exclusion from the supper therefore reflects not only his anti-elitist populism but also his rejection of the vision of cosmopolitanism that the Florentines prefer: one that is grounded in history.

Politics is inextricably related to point of view in *Romola*, and Eliot as the perpetual narrator-observer of this political scene comes to see how 'the more cosmopolitan culture' of Renaissance Florence (as the anonymous reviewer described it), in her interpretation, is *made* more cosmopolitan, or indeed less so, precisely by the point of view that perceives it. The narrator's pause to dwell on Savonarola's all-things-to-all-people method at the end of Chapter 25 is a reminder not only of Savonarola's modus operandi, but also of the heterogeneity of the characters in *Romola* and their differing points of view. The narrator, who is the historian of the scene; the historians within the text, Bardo de' Bardi, Romola's father, and Machiavelli; Tito; and of course Romola, who in her eventual flight both from the intellectual life of her father and from the political strife prolonged by the political rulers, represents the search for a psychological language as one aspect of cosmopolitanism: all these characters are part of the wider audience against which Savonarola does rhetorical battle. But these characters – the narrator-historian, the symbolically blind historian of antiquity, the Machiavellian schemer, the un-Machiavellian Machiavelli, the visible Madonna, the prophetic preacher – are also archetypes of the literary and intellectual testing of cosmopolitanism, and its relation to history, that Eliot performs continuously in *Romola*. Although 'in Savonarola's preaching there were strains that appealed to the very finest susceptibilities of men's natures', 'for the mass of his audience all the pregnancy of his preaching lay in his strong assertion of supernatural claims'.[119] Savonarola extends himself to his mixed audience.

Savonarola's ethics are shown to be based on a rhetoric that lulls people into submission, or at least acquiescence, before imposing a mutual silence. By 1496, Romola is less interested in her family or in the world beyond Florence than in Florence itself, or rather a certain idea of Florence:

[119] Eliot, *Romola*, 237-238.

> The idea of home had come to be identified for her less with the house in the Via de' Bardi, where she sat in frequent loneliness, than with the towered circuit of Florence, where there was hardly a turn of the streets at which she was not greeted with looks of appeal or of friendliness.[120]

Romola, in thrall to Savonarola, has all but stopped conversing with people, and ethics have become reduced to body language. Thoughts have taken over from speech and paranoia has replaced interaction: Romola 'felt almost sure that Tito had seen her; he had the power of seeing everything without seeming to see it.'[121] Yet '[h]er trust in Savonarola's nature as greater than her own made a large part of the strength she had found.'[122]

Words have become unnecessary for Romola's purposes. Consequently, it is only in paradoxes that Romola's state of mind can at this point be expressed to the reader: 'the state of yearning passivity on which she had newly entered'; '[s]he had thrown all the energy of her will into renunciation.'[123] Philip Davis points out that in the writing of *Romola*, '[c]oncealment […] now […] becomes a persistent, psychological form of existence close to George Eliot's own deepest fears and insecurities.'[124] This transition from speech to interiorized, paradoxical states of mind can be more accurately pinpointed to the overlap between the second and third books (Chapters 41 and 42) in the three-decker format. Another time lacuna reflects both the passage of historical time and the endurable power of memory to break through it: the action moves directly from 'the most memorable Christmas-eve in her life to Romola, this of 1494',[125] to 'the thirtieth of October, 1496.'[126] History threatens, at this point, to be overwhelmed by human beings reduced to raw emotions and by the impersonal forces of nature. Any sense of the past in the characters beyond guilt-ridden memory has all but disappeared in the face of war.

vi. 'Fra Girolamo had ceased to preach': Savonarola and bathos

At this point in the narrative, we are told that 'Fra Girolamo [Savonarola] had ceased to preach.'[127] Having persuaded Romola to stay and effectively silenced her, Savonarola is noticeably silent himself. The visually symbolic Bonfire of the Vanities takes the place of his sermons, and later, when the tide of opinion turns against him, the visible but wordless trial

[120] Eliot, *Romola*, 379.
[121] Eliot, *Romola*, 384.
[122] Eliot, *Romola*, 390.
[123] Eliot, *Romola*, 368, 370.
[124] Davis, *Transferred Life*, 287.
[125] Eliot, *Romola*, 370.
[126] Eliot, *Romola*, 371.
[127] Eliot, *Romola*, 373.

by fire replaces, as an episteme, the invisible faith the people had in Savonarola's words. Thus 'the language of the inner voices is written out in letters of fire.'[128] His ultimate ignominy is not martyrdom but, as he says to himself (becoming his last possible interlocutor), 'the blotting out of a life that has been a protest against wrong.'[129] For Romola, the last glimpse of Savonarola is over before it begins:

> The moment was past. Her face was covered again, and she only knew that Savonarola's voice had passed into eternal silence.[130]

Savonarola has become part of a history that is the record of failed revolutions: Romola accepts that her love for him was born of necessity rather than any intrinsic power in his message or character. What had seemed to be history in the making has become, in retrospect, for Romola at least, one of 'the unhistorical quarrels' that the narrator alludes to at the beginning of Chapter 1. The narrative has come full circle, moving from the personal and the unhistorical to the impersonal and seemingly historic, and back again. Romola still needs history, however: events might have ordered themselves independently of human desires, but history is still composed of those human desires. Savonarola's betrayal of Romola is as flawed, for Eliot, as Tito's betrayal, if not more so, because it has involved direct rhetorical manipulation as well as dissimulation. Misrepresentation, or deception of others, is worse than self-deception.

For Eliot, Savonarola's quasi-cosmopolitan appeal to mankind's universal destiny is flawed. But the private Savonarola, ironically, offers a greater clue to his universal significance. What is universally significant about Savonarola is his demonstration of the fact that everyone has moral ambiguity within themselves. As the narrator admits, 'we can give [Savonarola] a reverence that needs no shutting of the eyes to fact, if we regard his life as a drama in which there were great inward modifications accompanying the outward changes.'[131] The nearest approach to a universal morality, then, is in the acknowledgment of the universal unknowability of the human mind, even one's own, solely in terms of reason. Morality, in the world of *Romola*, is largely an emotional rather than a rational concern, and Savonarola's appeals to the emotions offer one potential means by which world-citizenship is possible. But where Savonarola stumbles, crucially, is in his idea that a sense of the past should be denied or repressed. '[I]nward modifications' are as much a part of history as 'outward changes'.

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[128] Eliot, *Romola*, 446.
[129] Eliot, *Romola*, 543.
[130] Eliot, *Romola*, 584.
[131] Eliot, *Romola*, 238.

Eliot's moral scheme in *Romola* – her idea that emotional responses to the present must be tempered by reverence for the past – is more complex than the 'wide fellow-feeling with all that is human' called for in *The Mill on the Floss*. What complicates it is the recognition that too 'wide' a 'fellow-feeling' can let all kinds of knowledge, generated by our own distinct impressions, slip through the net. Savonarola is misguided because he fails to ally universal emotions with historical knowledge, and so produce a cosmopolitanism that is compatible with, rather than resistant to, the weight of history.

If *Romola* condemns Tito for his misused cosmopolitanism and laments Savonarola's misguided and privately repudiated cosmopolitanism, *Daniel Deronda*, by contrast, does not condemn its eponymous hero. Deronda, a Jew brought up as a Christian Englishman, has cosmopolitanism thrust upon him by the discovery of his Jewish ancestry but it is also to some extent self-fashioned. *Deronda* considers the cosmopolitanism of its characters, Deronda chief among them, as something to be worked with, or through, rather than – in the case of Tito – misdirected. Deronda's desire to see the 'East' of his Jewish ancestors is part of a wider testing of cosmopolitanism, rather than a direct rebuke to it. Before travelling east, Deronda can still say to the Jewish scholar, Mordecai, in London, '[t]his is the happiest room in the world to me. Besides, I will imagine myself in the East, since I am getting ready to go there some day.'[132] Cosmopolitanism is an imaginative as well as a physical effort. Deronda, like Mordecai, wants to give the Jews 'a national centre, such as the English have, though they too are scattered over the face of the globe.'[133] The diasporic nature of Jewish settlement across the world is reinforced by Deronda's ability – he is more than just joking – to imagine himself already in the putative 'national centre' (somewhere in 'the East') simply by being in the company of another Jew in England. The vision of centre and periphery Deronda envisages, therefore, can hardly be called an absolute one.

In a similar way, Savonarola's vision as realised most fully, but unreliably, in his recorded confession, envisages – as in his sermon – a series of concentric circles of obligation, emanating from Florence:

> Hardly a word was dishonourable to him except what turned on his prophetic annunciations. He was unvarying in his statement of the ends he had pursued for Florence, the Church, and the world; and, apart from the mixture of falsity in that claim to special inspiration by which he sought to gain hold of men's minds, there was no admission of having used unworthy means. Even in this confession, and

[132] Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 734.
[133] Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 747.

> without expurgation of the notary's malign phrases, Fra Girolamo shone forth as a man who had sought his own glory indeed, but sought it by labouring for the very highest end—the moral welfare of men—not by vague exhortations, but by striving to turn beliefs into energies that would work in all the details of life.[134]

Savonarola is literally self-centred, regarding himself as the centre from which reformation will emanate. The confession is then directly quoted as read by Romola, becoming an ironic appendix to his Duomo sermon. Eliot italicizes a phrase that ends 'one memorable passage': '*such a work as I contemplated demanded a man of excellent virtues*.'[135] If for Theophrastus, '[t] he time is not yet come for cosmopolitanism to be highly virtuous', for Eliot the time is not yet come for Savonarola's 'virtues' to include cosmopolitanism. For Romola, reflecting on Savonarola, '[i]n moments of ecstatic contemplation, doubtless, the sense of self melted in the sense of the Unspeakable, and in that part of his experience lay the elements of genuine self-abasement; but in the presence of his fellow-men for whom he was to act, pre-eminence seemed a necessary condition of his life.'[136] Savonarola's cosmopolitanism, which should aspire to self-abnegation, is constrained, in practice, by self-elevation: detachment, and the 'highly mixed character of his preaching', are not enough.

As with Tito, Eliot's characterization of Savonarola is given added weight by the scenes of bathos in which he is the central participant, or the object of private ridicule. Behind his back, one citizen jokes at Savonarola's expense:

> 'I hope he has had a new vision, however,' said Francesco Dei, sneeringly. 'The old ones are somewhat stale. Can't your Frate get a poet to help out his imagination for him?'[137]

Machiavelli then claims, apropos of Savonarola, that '[t]he secret of oratory lies, not in saying new things, but in saying things with a certain power that moves the hearers'.[138] This echoes Alexander Pope's famous definition of 'true wit', namely '[w]hat was oft thought, but ne'er so well expressed',[139] and with Popean bathos Eliot goes on to describe 'The Florentine Joke' (as Chapter 16 is titled), which is entirely farcical. A quack doctor, lathered for shaving by the barber, Nello, is lampooned by being presented by a woman with a sick child which is

[134] Eliot, *Romola*, 578.
[135] Eliot, *Romola*, 579.
[136] Eliot, *Romola*, 579.
[137] Eliot, *Romola*, 169.
[138] Eliot, *Romola*, 170.
[139] Alexander Pope, *The Major Works*, edited with an introduction and notes by Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 27.

actually, when its rags are removed, a gibbering monkey. The diabolic monkey, the doctor, and the doctor's horse, all run away in fright 'across the piazza', pantomimically.[140]

The emphasis is on the joke as both funny in itself and representative of an old, established humour which by its public, farcical nature has a broad, even universal appeal:

> It was a scene such as Florentines loved, from the potent and reverend signor going to council in his *lucco*, down to the grinning youngster, who felt himself master of all situations when his bag was filled with smooth stones from the convenient dry bed of the torrent. The grey-headed Domenico Cennini laughed no less heartily than the younger men, and Nello was triumphantly secure of the general admiration.[141]

This urbane description of the mirth caused by the scene is part of the process by which bathos, in deeds and words, becomes an example of cosmopolitanism. The humour may be typically Florentine, but it is a joke that needs no reference to local tradition or literature (though it has a literary precedent in Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*), playing up as it does to a universal comprehension of incongruity as the catalyst for laughter. Savonarola is conspicuous here by his absence, but this is symbolic of the imaginative limits of his puritanism: he has cut himself off from a tradition of subversive humour that is in its way a universal language.

Bathos according to Sutherland's definition, stupidity for public view, is exactly what happens in this chapter, and it has an appeal that foreshadows the Florentines' rejection of Savonarola's puritanism. The narrator describes the bonfire of vanities as 'this crowning act of the new festivities' in which '[t]he mass of the Florentine boyhood and youth was no longer left to its own genial promptings towards street mischief and crude dissoluteness';[142] but the 'Anathema' or vanities they amass include, preposterously, 'certain little reddened balls brought from the Levant, intended to produce upon a sallow cheek a sudden bloom of the most ingenuous falsity', and 'ringlets and coils of "dead hair"'.[143] Once more, stupidity is a leavening agent, but Eliot is not so much haughtily detached from her characters' folly as she is knowledgeable about its implications for everyone. There is an understanding that history should be examined rather than ignored:

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[140] Eliot, *Romola*, 176.
[141] Eliot, *Romola*, 178.
[142] Eliot, *Romola*, 423.
[143] Eliot, *Romola*, 424.

> Had there been bonfires in the old time? There was to be a bonfire now, consuming impurity from off the earth. Had there been symbolic processions? There were to be processions now, but the symbols were to be white robes and red crosses and olive wreaths […][144]

The tension here, expressed as though spoken by the crowd, is between the impulse to consult historical precedent and the impulse to disregard it; or between the sense of the past that bulks out Florence's cosmopolitan sense of itself, and the sense of reform that narrows it into chronological snobbery, or the received notion that the present is always superior to the past.

In between these set-piece bathetic scenes, however, there is already a gradual progress from an emphasis on words to an emphasis on silent deeds, from direct to indirect speech, and from dialogue to interior monologue. This is acknowledged in the text: Romola, for example, having removed her wedding ring, remembers her last meeting with her dying brother, Dino, and asks herself – in a piece of interior monologue that itself rejects direct speech – 'What had the words of that vision to do with her real sorrows? That fitting of certain words was a mere chance; the rest was all vague—nay, those words themselves were vague; they were determined by nothing but her brother's memories and beliefs.'[145] Romola loses faith in conventional speech, which has betrayed her, but her memories are more powerful than ever: she is 'conscious of something deeper than that coincidence of words which made the parting contact with her dying brother live anew in her mind […] If there were much more of such experience as his in the world, she would like to understand it—would even like to learn the thoughts of men who sank in ecstasy before the pictured agonies of martyrdom.'[146] Romola then thinks back to 'those moments in the Duomo when she had sobbed with a mysterious mingling of rapture and pain, while Fra Girolamo offered himself a willing sacrifice for the people'.[147]

For this reason, the seemingly sinister Bonfire becomes a comical event, 'the new Carnival, which was a sort of sacred parody of the old.'[148] 'Sorrow and joy have each their peculiar narrowness',[149] the narrator admits, and at these spectacles, the set-pieces of the novel, there is always a fine line between the two. Savonarola's aborted trial by fire is, of course, the most disappointing anti-climax, but it is precisely this lack of high drama, ending the epoch not with a bang but a whimper, which renders Savonarola morally as well as rhetorically

[144] Eliot, *Romola*, 424.
[145] Eliot, *Romola*, 328.
[146] Eliot, *Romola*, 329.
[147] Eliot, *Romola*, 329.
[148] Eliot, *Romola*, 419.
[149] Eliot, *Romola*, 426.

redundant in the eyes of the people. The narrator balances the partisan concerns of the Florentines in an ironic description of the anti-climax:

> Everyone knew now that the Trial by Fire was not to happen. The Signoria was doubtless glad of the rain, as an obvious reason, better than any pretext, for declaring that both parties might go home.[150]

The descent from 'everyone' to the 'Signoria' (governing body) to 'both parties' mirrors the anti-climax, as each renders the next redundant. These redundancies are part of Eliot's internal deconstruction of Florentine history: in the long run, the sense of the past is seen to matter more than the course of events themselves, just as hindsight shows the true significance of apparently insignificant events.

This still leaves open the question of how far history can be altered by individual free will. What the narrator calls 'the problem where the sacredness of obedience ended and where the sacredness of rebellion began',[151] a problem for Romola and Savonarola, is also a metaphor for history, which can be either obeyed and reverenced or rebelled against and rejected. A sense of history solves the problem of how to reconcile the narrowness of one's immediate surroundings with the wider world, but bathos – one kind of humour – has the unique effect of blurring the line between obedience and rebellion, as everything is consumed by its own negation. By this definition, the very notion of the 'historical novel' is oxymoronic and therefore bathetic: *Romola* is a historical novel about anti-climaxes, and bathos creates, finally, an effect of transcendence based on its very depletion. To be a citizen of the world, *Romola* implies, is to see the world as a series of shocks, registered, remembered, and assimilated within a historical narrative that is anything but tidy, rather than as a series of easy and cosy sympathies. As Machiavelli reflects after the aborted trial by fire, '[w]ith the times so much on his tide as they are about Church affairs, [Savonarola] might have done something great.'[152] Cosmopolitanism thus depends upon this schematic reordering of events in their true retrospective significance, a reordering that is foreshadowed by the bathetic scenes.

For the narrator, Savonarola's renunciation of martyrdom makes him more of a martyr: '*But therefore he may the more fitly be called a martyr by his fellow-men to all time*' (Eliot's emphasis).[153] Savonarola for Eliot is far closer to heroic than villainous, but that heroism

[150] Eliot, *Romola*, 543.
[151] Eliot, *Romola*, 474.
[152] Eliot, *Romola*, 544.
[153] Eliot, *Romola*, 581.

stems, paradoxically, from a flawed conception of himself which distracted him all along from 'the true light' of what he saw. In this sense, Savonarola's decline and fall is bathetic: he not only loses his popular support, but his martyrdom is secured by the denial that he is a martyr at all. His characterization in *Romola* does not make him stupid, but nor does it make him saintly. For Eliot to present such a vociferously single-minded character in her fictionalized Savonarola, and at the same time to express such patience with him as a historical figure, is characteristic not only of her sympathy but also of her intellectual fair-mindedness. It is cosmopolitan in a historical sense, too: 'his fellow-men to all time' is the historical, temporal equivalent of 'his fellow men in all countries'. Savonarola in his final chapter stops being a Florentine revolutionary and becomes an international mystic: in spirit, he leaves Florence behind and enters the realm of history.

Romola, personally conversant with Savonarola, becomes his final, historical arbiter. Romola is almost an internal narrator of the final six chapters of the novel (including the epilogue). As with the narrator witnessing Tito's death, this focus enables her to uncover aspects of history which, were it not for her leaving Florence, might have passed unwitnessed. The dream-like Chapter 68 has the heroine cut off from the city and her family, spiritually independent, saint-like in her attitude, even taken for a modern Madonna, but also newly connected with the claims made by a beseeching wider world with its infinite turbulent histories. Romola encounters a living, crying child alone with three dead adults, perished from 'the familiar pestilence',[154] all of whom she takes to be Jewish refugees from the expulsions conducted by Spain and Portugal. Romola becomes known to the locals as simply 'the Blessed Lady'.[155] In this way, she crosses the boundaries of the novel and its historicist remit: she is someone already of the past and already of the future. In an image reminiscent of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* or *The Lady from the Sea* (1888), Romola passes into myth: 'Many legends were afterwards told in that valley about the blessed Lady who came over the sea'.[156] *Romola* therefore lets its heroine break free from one kind of history (military, civic, puritanical) and move towards another (peaceful, agrarian, ecumenical). Like Savonarola, Romola is worthier of veneration because she has renounced something. Unlike Tito's renunciation of his past, however, Romola's takes account of the lives of others, represented by the persecuted Jews; she moves towards a sense of the past in a general and practical sense, a pragmatic cosmopolitanism that includes history as a necessary component. Her return to Florence, as

[154] Eliot, *Romola*, 560.
[155] Eliot, *Romola*, 566.
[156] Eliot, *Romola*, 566.

with the spirit in the 'Proem', makes her see it in a new and disconcerting light. She asks questions concerning historical interpretation: 'What if Fra Girolamo had been wrong? What if the life of Florence was a web of inconsistencies?'[157] The questions are weighted, and although they distress Romola, they remove the illusions her overfamiliarity with Florence had built up. When all Romola's questions are answered, Savonarola's confession becomes more poignant.

The Epilogue eschews this kind of historical speculation and the detachment of the 'Proem' in favour of a new, clean, topographical and historical precision:

> On the evening of the twenty-second of May, 1509, five persons, of whose history we have known something, were seated in a handsome upper room opening on to a loggia which, at its right-hand corner, looked all along the Borgo Pitti, and over the city gate towards Fiesole, and the solemn heights beyond it.[158]

The view is reversed from that of the 'Proem', which looked down onto Florence from the hills. This does not mean to signify that Eliot has deliberately prioritized close analysis over cosmopolitan detachment; rather, it shows that she can achieve both in the same novel without losing either the intellectual speculation or the solidity of specification. Her use of 'history' here puns on the lexicographical split in English between personal story and total documented past (in Italian there is no such distinction). Every individual has a personal history, Eliot is saying, of which the documented sum total constitutes 'human history' open to study.

When Eliot claims to be doing in *Romola* 'something in historical romance that is rather different in character from what has been done before', what she is doing in practice, I have argued, is adding a cosmopolitan third dimension. Cosmopolitanism in *Romola* is not shown to be something inherently unfortunate or detrimental, and it permeates Renaissance Florence so that all characters are affected by it, whether through learning or war or history or travel or communal religion. *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* theorizes the claims already made for cosmopolitanism and history – rhetorical, moral, and formal – in Eliot's fiction, with *Romola* the undervalued but central example. For Henry James, as we have seen, Tito is the outstanding character in 'on the whole the finest thing [Eliot] wrote', and this is no coincidence. Tito reads as a highly Jamesian character, not least in the cosmopolitanism that has been thrust upon him as part of his lot. James's complex understanding of

[157] Eliot, *Romola*, 568.
[158] Eliot, *Romola*, 585.

cosmopolitanism, taken a generation beyond Eliot into the twentieth century, is my concern in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: The Jamesian 'cosmopolite' reconsidered: historicizing cosmopolitanism and playing with difference in *What Maisie Knew*

i. Being a 'cosmopolite' in Henry James's fiction

Cosmopolitanism in Henry James's fiction is a highly complex issue. As for George Eliot, its significance for James altered over time; unlike Eliot, however, James lived to witness its cultural commodification during the 1880s and 1890s. In 1877, fairly early in his writing career and in the wake of Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, James could write self-deprecatingly but entirely seriously that '[b]eing a cosmopolite is an accident, but one must make the best of it'.[1] Yet, as Jessica Berman notes, this understanding had given way '[b]y the [eighteen-]nineties' to an altered sense, on James's part, of cosmopolitanism as 'more than an accident'; he was now starting to see it as a pose all too easily adopted in *fin-de-siècle* London, then the largest and richest city on earth.[2]

Just as Eliot was reacting against the Count Fosco archetype, so James in the 1890s and 1900s was reacting against a newly self-conscious cosmopolitan culture, exemplified by the magazine *The Cosmopolitan*, founded in 1886 and bought by William Randolph Hearst in 1905.[3] James's post-1895 fiction makes cosmopolitanism a means to an end, rather than an end in itself: an accident put to some moral purpose, rather than an identity adopted for its own sake. James's newfound cosmopolitan dilemma – how to rescue cosmopolitanism from its excessive cultural commodification, without isolating 'cosmopolites' from society – is solved, I argue in this chapter, by the dramatization of accidental cosmopolites who experience an incremental awareness of history that redeems them from the new, 1890s *faux*-cosmopolitanism and offers them a fourth dimension with which to 'make the best of' their inherited position.

This crucial difference between accidental (mis)fortune and adopted identity mirrors the way in which James's fiction grapples with, on the one hand, the burden of contingent, external circumstances, and, on the other, the pressure to conform in an increasingly competitive, self-consciously modern, and culturally polymorphous world. In this chapter, however, I am less concerned with what June Hee Chung calls 'the media arts of modernity' in James's

[1] James, *Collected Travel Writings: The Continent*, 721.
[2] Berman, 'Cosmopolitanism', 142.
[3] See Jessica Berman, *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 28-71, for an analysis of James's contributions to the magazine.

depiction of a 'commercial cosmopolitanism',[4] than with the residual effects of accidental cosmopolitanism on characters who are by reason of age, temperament, and other circumstances dramatized by James, comparatively disengaged from the self-conscious, commercially propped-up *nouveau*-cosmopolitanism of the 1890s. It is an overlooked fact that James retains a preference for presenting what I call 'accidental' cosmopolite characters in his later novels, even after his understanding of cosmopolitanism has altered to incorporate the new, self-conscious cosmopolitanism of the *fin-de-siècle*.

From the 1890s, James's fiction is concerned less with the drama of provincial Americans versus worldly Europeans, than with the interplay between accidental and self-conscious cosmopolite figures of whatever nationality. James's project in this phase of his writing life is thus the rehabilitation of cosmopolitanism as an idea by a renewed, sustained, and multi-faceted dramatization of the accidental cosmopolite character facing the exigencies of a newly complex world. Three of James's novels, *What Maisie Knew* (1897), *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), and the incomplete *The Sense of the Past*, dramatize the predicament of 'accidental' or 'naïve' cosmopolites – those who are born cosmopolite or have cosmopolitanism thrust upon them, rather than those who consciously achieve it – in ways that demonstrate James's complex understanding of what it is, precisely, for someone to be a 'cosmopolite' in the modern world. Thus in *What Maisie Knew* (1897), which I consider in this chapter, we see the proto-cosmopolite child, the person who is born cosmopolite; in *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), we see the impressionable young woman, made cosmopolite by her excursions into a fuller historical awareness; and in *The Sense of the Past* (1917), we see the apparently worldly man who has cosmopolitanism thrust upon him by a literal confrontation with the past. James's thinking about cosmopolitanism and history thus takes on three distinct stages during his later writing life.[5]

As I described in the introduction, the word 'cosmopolite' carries an inbuilt tension between *cosmos* and *politês*, or world and citizen (inhabitant of a city). This tension, as James sees it, is not merely between the world and the citizen, but, more specifically, between the accident of circumstances (what life throws at a person) and the instinct to conform and survive (what

[4] June Hee Chung, *Henry James and the Media Arts of Modernity: Commercial Cosmopolitanism* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

[5] Throughout this and the following chapter I refer to texts which follow James's revised ('New York') Edition of *What Maisie Knew* and *The Wings of the Dove*; *The Sense of the Past* was incomplete and unrevised, published only in Percy Lubbock's posthumous edition of 1917. My choice of James's revised texts is determined by the need to incorporate all stages of James's thinking within the scope of my analysis, as well as by an aesthetic preference for the later James.

the person throws back at life). To be a cosmopolite, then, can itself be an accident that is part of the inscrutable *cosmos*; yet it can also be a choice enacted by the urbane inhabitant of the *polis*. How to negotiate one's way out of accident, or alternatively, in James's words, 'make the best of it', is something that implies both a moral and an aesthetic choice, as I hope to demonstrate. What I call the 'cosmopolitan dilemma' in James's later writings consists of the problematic search for a way of life that is neither too conformist nor too isolated. The major contribution of the 'cosmopolite' to human relations, as James sees it, is the attempt to see the world as a whole from both within and without different perspectives, an attempt to be both insider (*politês*) and outsider (existing outside of the *polis*, in the wider *cosmos*) at once. This is what makes the cosmopolite ethically important to James; it redeems him or her from the negative charges so often levelled against cosmopolites, namely that they are overprivileged posers and chancers, that they are superficial and lacking in moral integrity, and that their lives are characterized by an absence of roots and allegiances. The person most likely to have to face this cosmopolitan dilemma is a recurring archetype in James's fiction, one that I call the 'accidental' or 'naïve' 'cosmopolite'. This is the person who has not chosen cosmopolitanism, but who can, if he or she chooses, put it to some moral purpose.

For James, the cosmopolitan dilemma is not insoluble: the answer to it, he believes, lies in history. More particularly, it lies in what he calls the 'historic sense',[6] that 'sense of the past' which his late, incomplete novel, *The Sense of the Past* (begun in 1900, resumed in 1914, and posthumously published in 1917) directly and deliberately dramatizes. As mentioned in the introduction, cosmopolitanism as a concept is in essence a spatial or geographical one (the *cosmos* and the *polis* being first and foremost places), but James introduces a crucial temporal dimension to the life of the cosmopolite in his fiction. He shows how the naïve cosmopolite, well-travelled but perhaps lacking a sense of origins, can be redeemed by a sense of history. He also shows how geographical reach (or travel) are not necessarily life-affirming in themselves, but how, allied with history, they can be. *The Sense of the Past*, a science fiction story with a time-travel scenario, both epitomizes and concludes James's attempts to dramatize, in fictional form, the sense of the past as a way out of the cosmopolitan dilemma, especially for those characters whose cosmopolitanism has been thrust upon them (the accidental or naïve cosmopolites), but also for those characters whose cosmopolitanism is more self-conscious. In *The Sense of the Past*, James fantasizes an ideal way out of the

[6] For instance, Henry James, *Autobiographies*, edited by Philip Horne (New York: Library of America, 2016), 441.

cosmopolitan dilemma, but such fantasy carries with it all James's prior experience, and much of his prior art, to give it weight. What Theodor Adorno says of psychoanalysis, 'nothing is true except the exaggerations',[7] is resonant of James's approach to what, by the 1890s and into the 1900s, he had come to see as a major moral and aesthetic conundrum in life and art.

Cosmopolitanism in James is a flexible category, but it can be understood, broadly, in three different ways. Firstly, it can be an identity, either a badge of honour or, increasingly during James's lifetime, a pose and throwaway tag. Secondly, it can be a political and philosophical position, tied either to a pragmatic impetus to collaborate (to be an effective citizen, including in the exchange of art and ideas), or to an idealistic notion of the universality and commonality of all cultures (the cosmopolite as citizen *of the world*). Finally, it can be a view of the changed nature of the modern world as, paradoxically, either broader and larger or smaller and denser than before. James's characters, including his narrators ('omniscient' or otherwise), tacitly accept or renounce these definitions. Often, they do so with an arresting ambiguity that is part of James's overriding method of deconstruction and destabilization of received wisdom and easy answers. I argue that the tension between these definitions and sub-definitions of cosmopolitanism rests upon James's nuanced understanding of history. History, for James, is among other things a history of the growth (and sometimes the diminution) of cosmopolitanism as a force in the world; a force for good, by and large, but during his own lifetime intensified to a point at which it may also produce evil or detrimental effects.

In all three novels, it is history, I argue, that offers the Jamesian protagonist the best means of bridging the conspicuous gap between the universal and the particular (the *cosmos* and the *polis*) and so come to some resolution of the cosmopolitan dilemma. As noted above, the Jamesian cosmopolite seeks a way of life that is neither too conformist nor too isolated. History, or the historic sense, is one way of theorizing the idea of the cosmopolite which moves beyond, but does not leave behind, the questions of identity so prominent (and perhaps unavoidable) in critical treatments of James's writings. History is of prime importance in my analysis because it removes James from the confines of identity politics without undermining his concern with the fundamental question of what justifies, and constitutes, the individual's place in the world. Since cosmopolitanism in James is an open-ended category, the reader is

[7] Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, translated from the German by E. F. N. Jephcott (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 29.

free to infer its significance from the texts. It is important to state here that 'cosmopolite' and its derivatives are not words that James uses very frequently in his enormous body of writing. This is partly, I believe, in order to keep the concept open-ended, but also to prevent it from swamping his other categories and concerns. Were James to offer the reader, in a published text or even in private correspondence, a final and irrefutable definition of cosmopolitanism and the cosmopolite, this would risk upsetting and overwhelming the other concerns of his fiction. His early claim that 'to be a cosmopolite is an accident, but one must make the best of it', is the closest he comes, but this simply begs further questions about how one makes the best of it and to what extent cosmopolitanism can be made to go beyond the accidental. If the cosmopolitan dilemma and its resolution are not quite the figure in the carpet of James's fiction, they come close to being so, and all the more so for being open-ended.

It is possible, nevertheless, to infer something of James's notion of a history-oriented cosmopolitanism from his use of the word 'cosmopolite' (as noun and adjective), and the way he connects it to other words and phrases. In James's non-fiction, where author and narrator are one and the same, the word 'cosmopolite' carries many tints. As an adjective, it is set alongside other adjectives and adverbs that suggest something variously attractive and unattractive. Where the word is applied to places and the prevailing attitudes of their inhabitants, James's tone is sometimes implicitly admonitory. Writing of his childhood, James describes Newport during the American Civil War as 'comparatively, and in its degree incurably, cosmopolite'.[8] In the 'social soil' of New York, James remembers, 'New England had, by one's impression, cropped up […] which was exactly a note in the striated, the piebald or, more gracefully, cosmopolite local character.'[9] He elaborates on this: the 'comparatively […] market-town suggestion' of Boston '[…] did essentially contribute to what had become so highly desirable, the reinforcement of my vision of American life by the idea of variety.'[10] Where the word is used of a person, James associates it with qualities both positive and negative: thus Anthony Trollope, to his credit, lacks 'the pedantry of the cosmopolite',[11] but Charles Eliot Norton, also to his credit, is 'truly animated by the social spirit and a due cosmopolite ideal'.[12] James can describe an otherwise 'slip-shod and vulgar' critic of Stendhal as writing 'with a garrulous *bonhomie*—that of an easy-going cosmopolite,

[8] James, *Autobiographies*, 441.
[9] James, *Autobiographies*, 469.
[10] James, *Autobiographies*, 469.
[11] James, *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*, 1346.
[12] James, *Autobiographies*, 701.

well advanced, apparently, in years',[13] but he can also describe Prosper Mérimée, the French pioneer of the novella form, whom he greatly admires, as 'a modern cosmopolite'.[14]

The last attribution sees James consider the question of the origin of the word itself: 'The word, even so lately, had scarce been invented [Mérimée died in 1870], but, almost without knowing it, he [Mérimée] was a modern cosmopolite.'[15] James seems not to have been aware of it, but with an appropriateness that James would have appreciated it was the Europe-infused Washington Irving, the first internationally celebrated American writer, who first used the epithet 'cosmopolite' in modern times. The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites Irving's satirical *A History of New York* (1809) as containing the first instance of the word's use in English since a few obscure, self-consciously classical uses in the seventeenth century: the noun was 'apparently revived early in the 19th cent, and often contrasted with *patriot*, and so either reproachful or complimentary. To this 19th cent. revival nearly all the derivatives belong.'[16] In spite of his own immersion in European culture, Irving's revival of the word is not only satirical but implicitly reproachful, yet the satirical element of *A History of New York* dilutes and complicates the word's meaning from the outset.

In the persona of Dietrich Knickerbocker, the narrator-historian of *A History of New York*, Irving anticipates George Eliot's cosmopolitan cynic, Theophrastus. This cynicism is particularly evident when Knickerbocker describes one of the early Dutch settlers at Fort Casimir, Dirk Schuiler, who in 1654 told the Dutch at New Amsterdam (later New York) of the Fort's capture by the Swedes. Knickerbocker is ostensibly anti-cosmopolitan, but Irving is satirizing Knickerbocker as much as the object of his derision, Schuiler, and the term 'cosmopolite' could just as well be applied to Knickerbocker as to Schuiler:

> This was one Dirk Schuiler (or Skulker), a kind of hanger-on to the garrison, who seemed to belong to nobody, and in a manner to be self-outlawed. He was one of those vagabond Cosmopolites, who shark about the world as if they had no right or business in it, and who infest the skirts of society like poachers and interlopers. Every garrison and country village has one or more scape-goats of this kind, whose life is a kind of enigma, whose existence is without motive, who comes from the Lord knows

[13] James, *Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers, Prefaces to the New York Edition*, 812.
[14] James, *Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers, Prefaces to the New York Edition*, 581.
[15] James, *Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers, Prefaces to the New York Edition*, 581.
[16] "cosmopolite, n. and adj." OED Online. Oxford University Press. September 2019. www.oed.com/view/Entry/42264 (accessed October 18, 2019).

> where, who lives the Lord knows how, and who seems created for no other earthly purpose but to keep up the ancient and honorable order of idleness—[17]

If the revival of the word 'cosmopolite' is here meant ironically, nevertheless the third sentence in this paragraph is much more revealing than the second of the hidden meaning of cosmopolitanism in the nineteenth century. Cosmopolitanism is not the exclusive preserve, either at this date (1809) or indeed at the date described (1654), of the metropolitan rich. On the contrary, it is much closer to the spirit of Diogenes, who had lived entirely and purposely apart from the political and social centre of things in ancient Athens. Nor is it limited to the peripatetic military: 'every garrison *and country village* has one or more scape-goats of this kind' (my emphasis). The cosmopolite is, in fact, provincial, and Knickerbocker hypocritically derides him for being so. As James W. Tuttleton notes, '[f]or Dietrich Knickerbocker, problems of country are at once petty and cosmic.'[18] The same is true of Irving in his revival of the term 'cosmopolite'.

Irving was himself a cosmopolitan writer, as his abundant interest in German and Spanish legend would later confirm. Yet unravelling the 'enigma' of the life of the cosmopolite is, following Irving, one of the great themes of nineteenth-century literature. Already in 1809, the history of New York and its environs, with its provincial cosmopolites, offers one paradigm of this enigma that would last throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. Later in this chapter, I return to the significance of New York history and its relationship to cosmopolitanism in my reading of James's *The Wings of the Dove*. For now, it is safe to say that for James, following Irving, the epithet 'cosmopolite' can suggest not only experience, age, and worldly wisdom, but also modernity, novelty, and nonconformity. It is a state of being at once desirable and undesirable, curable and incurable, creditable and lamentable.

Much scholarship has seen cosmopolitanism in James to rest on either feminism or aestheticism, two movements that gained considerable literary impetus in the 1880s and 1890s. Berman emphasizes 'feminine language and identity' and 'the problem of women and their speech' as concerns in James's late writings that tie them to the politics of the late-nineteenth-century American journal, *The Cosmopolitan*, to which James contributed in the 1890s.[19] More recently, Tanya Agathocleous has convincingly argued that James's London

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[17] Washington Irving, *History, Tales and Sketches*, edited by James W. Tuttleton (New York: Library of America, 1983), 616-617.
[18] James W. Tuttleton (ed.), *Washington Irving: The Critical Reaction* (New York: AMS Press, 1993), 37.
[19] Berman, *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Community*, 32. See Berman, *Modernist Fiction*, 28-71, for a discussion of the above 'concerns' in James's later writings.

novel, *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), is, like Arthur Conan Doyle's detective novel, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), concerned principally with 'the ability of the aesthete figure[s] [Hyacinth Robinson and Sherlock Holmes] […] to maintain a global perspective: both novels make the case that the sublimity of urban space, with its infinite connections to life elsewhere, is the ultimate source of aesthetic experience.'[20] Important and insightful though these studies are, the New Woman and the male aesthete are only two archetypes through which James construes the 'cosmopolite' condition; they are not the full picture. Equally relevant to an understanding of Jamesian cosmopolitanism, I argue, are those characters whose cosmopolitanism is disguised by a superficial provincialism, by juvenility, or by a complex relationship to history. Maisie Farange in *What Maisie Knew*, Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove*, and Ralph Pendrel in *The Sense of the Past*, show the prominence of the sense of the past, or the historic sense, in James's pluralistic, open-ended understanding of the cosmopolitan.

ii. The idea of history and moral idealism

James, famously, has little interest in the remote past except from the point of view of an aesthetic tourist. His abiding interest, and the impetus for much of his fiction, is instead 'a palpable imaginable *visitable* past – […] the nearer distances and the clearer mysteries, the marks and signs of a world we may reach over to as by making a long arm we grasp an object at the other end of our own table.'[21] Such a tactile simile as an arm reaching across a table, vivid though it is, risks oversimplifying the Jamesian historian's task. The historian's job, for James, is not merely the archaeological collection of evidence for the purposes of a kind of passive, touristic inspection. Rather, it is interpreting history's 'marks and signs' in the light of other marks and signs in the orbit of one's own, and others', experience. It is the piecing together of a jigsaw puzzle which, however many battles, maps, and political institutions appear in the background, begins and ends with the testimony of the individual. Historical evidence is more valuable the nearer it can get to verifiable personal testimony; yet each testimony (as it were) must be seen in relation to the testimonies of others. What Pascale Casanova has said of literature and literary criticism, with reference to James's tale, 'The Figure in the Carpet' (1896), applies equally to James's understanding of history:

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[20] Agathocleous, *Urban Realism and the Cosmopolitan Imagination in the Nineteenth* Century, xxi. See also Agathocleous, 131-144.
[21] James, *Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers, Prefaces to the New York Edition*, 1177.

> If one is prepared to shift one's perspective, to step away from a particular text in order to examine it in relation to other texts, to try to detect similarities and dissimilarities between them and look for recurring patterns—in short, if one tries to take in the composition of the carpet as a whole, to see it as a coherent design, then it becomes possible to perceive the particularity of the pattern that one wishes to make appear.[22]

Distance and dissimilarity, in other words, give greater (not lesser) insight into personality and particularity, which are the ultimate goals of history, for James, because they are the truest essence of the past.

'Perspective', it should be noted, can mean both the individual, subjective consciousness, and the angle at which that consciousness perceives its object. As Philip Horne points out, '[t]here is not, for James, a single past, but shadings, distinctions, nearer and further distances in a receding perspective'.[23] That 'receding perspective', James's own, is just one of an infinite number of perspectives, and James does not imagine that his own is the only one he can trust, even though subjectivity is finally inescapable. Amanda Anderson points out that when she 'refer[s] to the cultivation of detachment' in Victorian writing, she is 'referring to the *aspiration* of a distanced view' (her emphasis).[24] James's essential empiricism – his broad understanding that knowledge rests on sense experience – is also, I argue, aspirational in this way, allowing for the possibility that something like accident and contingency has a role to play in shaping the lives of individuals. Accident and contingency, his fiction shows, are part of experience and therefore part of the structure and substance of individual lives. In addition, James's empiricism allows for the further possibility that the cultivation of a distanced view of the world – including a view of receding historical distance – may (paradoxically) enable a closer understanding of individual human beings. But what, for James, is the link between the lives of individuals and the history, as an accumulation of past events (or pasts), which inevitably shapes the world in which they find themselves? It is the symbolic figure of the 'cosmopolite': the person in whom geographical and historical 'reach' (to borrow James's tactile verb) are uniquely combined. For James, cosmopolitanism rests on a sense of the past; and a sense of the past, in turn, provides cosmopolitanism with its chief moral justification. As noted earlier, the major contribution of the 'cosmopolite' to human relations is the attempt to see the world as a whole from both within and without different perspectives. But such an

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[22] Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, translated by M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 3.
[23] Philip Horne, '"A Palpable Imaginable *Visitable* Past": Henry James and the Eighteenth Century', *Eighteenth Century Life* 32:2 (Spring 2008), 14-28 (14).
[24] Anderson, *The Powers of Distance*, 6.

attempt requires a sense of the past, a historic sense, as well as geographical reach. Where this is lacking, the problem lacks resolution.

'[H]ow little cosmopolitan' London must have seemed forty years earlier, James reflects in 1877 in a sketch on English 'Abbeys and Castles' (later reprinted in *English Hours* [1909]): 'how bound, in a thousand ways, with the narrowness of custom.'[25] He goes on:

> What was true of the great city at the time was of course doubly true of the provinces; and a community of the type of Ludlow [in Shropshire] must have been a kind of focus of insular propriety. Even then, however, the irritated alien would have had the magnificent ruins of the castle to dream himself back into good humour in. They would effectively have transported him beyond all waning or waxing Philistinisms.[26]

The 'irritated alien', transported back in time (like Ralph Pendrel in *The Sense of the Past*, to which I return in Chapter 4), needs history – represented here by the ruins of Ludlow Castle – in order to solve both the problem of staying in 'good humour', and the problem of endless changes in (bad) taste, 'waxing and waning Philistinisms'. The modern world may already in 1877 seem vulgarized to James, but Philistinism (famously, one of Matthew Arnold's conditions of modernity in England) can still be overcome by a sense of the past. Even a cosmopolitan time-traveller, on arrival in a narrower, earlier world, would need, James suggests, an ancillary sense of a *further* vanished past – however shrouded in myth, legend, and romance – in order to feel sufficiently grounded in the (experienced) present.

My proposition that a sense of the past is what morally justifies the sometimes dubious or at best ambiguous figure of the 'cosmopolite' in James's fiction (whether that character's cosmopolitanism is accidental, imputed, implied, or self-proclaimed), raises the thorny issue of James's personal moral philosophy. Whether James subscribes to a universal moral 'reality' or rejects moral ideals in favour of an insistent moral particularism, is a question that has divided scholars. For a moral philosopher like Robert Pippin, James is a moral idealist before he engages with the particular; his whole artistic project is seen to rest on making idealist claims about reality and testing their validity in the invented dramatic scenario:

> [James] suggests certain idealist claims about social and psychological reality (makes such a reality depend upon how they are experienced and described at a time in a community), reveals there to be such complexity and possibility in that experiencing and describing that he introduces a great fluidity

[25] James, *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*, 196.
[26] James, *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*, 196.

> and instability and multiple interpretability, and so radicalizes the judgemental and interpretative problem.[27]

James is not, in Pippin's analysis, a strict empiricist, but makes normative claims about moral reality and applies them to the imagined worlds of his fiction ('at a time in a community'), without being prepared to discard them completely if they do not always work; James 'radicalizes' rather than resolves the reader's moral responsibility in forming his or her own moral judgements based on the evidence James furnishes.

James's modernism is therefore visible, in one light, as part of a tradition of moral idealism. In *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations* (1997), Pippin examines modernist literature in the light of Hegel (about whose understanding of history George Eliot was ambivalent, as we have seen). Pippin proposes that 'the modern tradition is sustained by a defensible moral aspiration: to live freely.'[28] This immediately brings to mind some of James's famous dialogue set-pieces espousing a certain kind of self-fashioned freedom: Isabel Archer's desire to know prevailing moral codes '[s]o as to choose' whether or not to follow them in *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), for instance, or Lambert Strether's surrender to Little Bilham's advice to '[l]ive all you can' in *The Ambassadors* (1903).[29] Such moments in James's fiction seem to point towards a self-conscious, history-conscious morality, by invoking the idea of choice and will as things that emerge not only out of a consciousness of tradition but also out of a concurrent desire not to be enslaved by it. Pippin claims, furthermore, that James 'wants to frame the problem [of morality] in a self-consciously historical and social way',[30] while Adrian Poole asserts that James's representations of 'the comforts and discomforts' of culture, although obviously limited in time and place, 'have an historical force and they demand close attention'.[31]

In contrast to Pippin, other critics have read James as morally disengaged, at least as far as his art is concerned. Toril Moi claims (with Henrik Ibsen uppermost in mind) that literary modernism emerged as a reaction *against* a moral idealism:

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[27] Robert B. Pippin, *Henry James and Modern Moral Life* (2000; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 14.
[28] Robert B. Pippin, *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 24.
[29] James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 86; Henry James, *The Ambassadors* [1903], edited with an introduction and notes by Harry Levin (London: Penguin, 1986), 215.
[30] Pippin, *Modern Moral Life*, 5.
[31] Adrian Poole, *Henry James* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), xi.

> Ten years before Nietzsche, Henry James saw that the new movement in art would deliberately situate itself beyond good and evil, *beyond moral judgement* [Moi's emphasis]. To become a modernist is not to reject realism, it is to reject idealism.[32]

James's art, for Moi, is unconcerned with morality but concerned intimately with a reality that is seen more clearly for its being divested of ideals and moral judgements. Comparably, Terry Eagleton finds James to be a cultural but not a moral idealist, who 'would like to see the moral and the aesthetic at one', but who also knows that '[t]here are moral horrors lurking beneath the surface of social existence which mere style is powerless to confront'.[33] Eagleton claims that, for James, '[y]ou must avoid the simplistic polarities of the puritans, while [also] recognizing that rigorous moral distinctions [Eagleton does not give examples] are nevertheless necessary.'[34] I wish to suggest that cosmopolitanism is a paradigm for uniting the quasi-idealist, morally serious James and the anti-idealist, aestheticist James. If James's merging of aesthetics and ethics is already widely acknowledged ('It is art that *makes* life',[35] he famously wrote to H. G. Wells in 1915), his merging of history and geography as one aspect of this has received little consideration. Cosmopolitanism is an aspect of the present, in James's world, that needs history in order to account for its expansive geographical compass. History is the moral obverse of the amoral reach of the globe-trotting 'cosmopolite'. The visited past justifies the lived present, and an engagement with history, while never free from its own moral complications, is life-affirming and morally justifying in a way that travel alone, for its own sake or from obviously selfish motives, never can be.

iii. Historicizing cosmopolitanism

James, then, is a historian of people whose putative citizenship of the world renders them more in need of the past than most. Without conscious irony, Joseph Conrad, writing in 1905, called James 'the historian of fine consciences'.[36] History itself, at least since Hegel, has often been seen as the history of struggle, whether individual, class, national, racial, or sexual. Famously, Hegel claimed in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1832) that '[t]he history of the World is none other than the progress of the consciousness of Freedom

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[32] Toril Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism: Art, Theater, Philosophy* (2006; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 111.
[33] Terry Eagleton, *The English Novel: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 224-225.
[34] Eagleton, *The English Novel*, 226.
[35] Henry James, *Henry James: A Life in Letters*, edited with an introduction by Philip Horne (New York: Viking, 1999), 555.
[36] Quoted in Henry James, *The Portable Henry James*, edited with an introduction by John Auchard (London: Penguin, 2004), 600. Roslyn Jolly, in *Henry James: History, Narrative, Fiction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), finds in Conrad's appellation a presentation of James as 'the historian of those who give up the attempt to struggle with history' (v).

[…] [Freedom] itself is its own object of attainment, and the sole aim of the Spirit.'[37] The individual's struggle with history is, in James's fiction, a strong counterforce to Hegel's idea of history's struggle for individual freedom. Conrad's remark can be interpreted as a recognition that James is a historian of people whose moral 'conscience' is 'fine' in James's sense of ethically authentic as well as aesthetically pleasing, whether they give up the attempt to overcome the past or not. To be a 'fine conscience' is not necessarily to give up on the past in this way, and many of James's 'fine consciences' are themselves historians in the sense of people who struggle with history just as James did all his life. Indeed, the struggle with history can be more of a mentally taxing one, for James's characters, than any struggle with what one might call cultural difference, or clashes within one's value system. This is one reason, perhaps, why James's characters can seem unattractively detached from the everyday and the mundane. As the moral philosopher, K. A. Appiah, points out, '[moral] dilemmas are a mainstay of imaginative fiction, but clashes among our own values, if usually less exalted, are an everyday occurrence'.[38] James must be read as a historian of robust, history-confronting 'cosmopolites' as well as a historian writing from a cosmopolitan point of view.

The idea of history as something with a universal import has itself a long and distinguished history. Kant's *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht* ('Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose') (1784) is the *Ur*-text of philosophical attempts to see history through cosmopolitan eyes.[39] Kant begins the essay by admitting that the idea of a history of mankind in which mankind consciously enacts some kind of collective plan or goal for itself is inconceivable:

> Since men in their endeavors behave, on the whole, not just instinctively, like the brutes, nor yet like rational citizens of the world according to some agreed-on plan, no history of man conceived

[37] Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 19.
[38] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006; London: Penguin, 2007), 65. Appiah's book argues, among other things, that cultural difference is less of an ethical dilemma than much fiction ('classic' fiction above all) might allow us to think. Yet Appiah does not much consider the way in which the past (or 'history') performs, in everyday lives, a function like that of fiction in giving us pause for thought and forcing us to confront cultural differences that are often troubling, particularly where such history is personal and tied to the question of one's identity in relation to that history (as opposed to contemporary geography).
[39] Lewis White Beck renders the title of Kant's essay as 'Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View'. Although somewhat misleading, this translation of the title has an unconsciously Jamesian ring, since it implies that to see something from a particular viewpoint, and to have a particular purpose or goal, are one and the same. Immanuel Kant, *On History*, edited with an introduction by Lewis White Beck, translated by Lewis White Beck et al (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), 11.

> according to a plan seems to be possible, as it might be possible to have such a history of bees or beavers.[40]

He proposes instead that mankind may serve a natural purpose of which it is unconscious:

> Since the philosopher cannot presume any [conscious] individual purpose among men in their greatest drama [Kant earlier refers to 'the great world-stage'[41]], there is no other expedient for him except to try to see if he can discover a natural purpose in the idiotic course of things human. In keeping with this purpose, it might be possible to have a history with a definite natural plan for creatures who have no plan of their own.[42]

However, the obstacles to a universal cosmopolitan society are in practice anything but academic, for '[t]he problem of establishing a perfect civic constitution is dependent upon the problem of a lawful external relation among states and cannot be solved without a solution of the latter problem.'[43] In the end, Kant decides that 'to consider ourselves as having reached *morality* – for that, much is lacking.'[44] To reach the goal of 'moral order', 'a long internal working of each political body toward the education of its citizens is required. Everything good that is not based on a morally good disposition, […] is nothing but pretense and glittering misery.'[45]

Education, however, is not the only means to a moral civilization, since peace between states is required if education is to be improved. As Jessica Berman observes, 'in the later essay "Perpetual Peace" (1795), Kant conceives this universal peaceful society as a confederation of states, whose occupation in trade and commerce demands co-existence. His cosmopolitan solution to warfare rests, therefore, on the paired assumptions that citizens owe primary loyalties to local states, but that their more universal interests arise from the demands of worldwide commerce.'[46] Such reliance of cosmopolitanism upon commerce, which Kant prophesies, and which Berman takes to be Kant's solution to warfare and therefore the means by which mankind may reach its 'natural' end, is precisely something James critiques in his writings. Cosmopolitanism, for James, is a moral as well as a historical force, and he would agree with Kant's plea in the earlier essay that '[t]he ideal of morality belongs to culture; its use for some simulacrum of morality in the love of honor and outward decorum constitutes

[40] Kant, *On History*, 12.
[41] Kant, *On History*, 12.
[42] Kant, *On History*, 12.
[43] Kant, *On History*, 18.
[44] Kant, *On History*, 21.
[45] Kant, *On History*, 21.
[46] Berman, 'Cosmopolitanism', 139.

mere civilization.'[47] In his writings James also critiques the 'pretense and glittering misery' of outward appearances uninformed by good intentions.

James, writing a century later than Kant, provides, on the surface, an exemplary literary case study for considering the viability of Kant's idea for a cosmopolitan history. James's writings raise questions that might be advanced in response to Kant's essay: *can* there be a universal history to a cosmopolitan end? *Does* history serve such an unwritten purpose? James differs from Kant, however, in that his idea of history is that it is composed of the histories of individuals with individual experiences, people united by the common fact of leaving traces of themselves for posterity. Crucially, whereas Kant in the 1780s proposes the cosmopolitanizing of history, James, sensing in the 1890s that cosmopolitanism is becoming commodified and coarsened (too often becoming just a pose, for example), seeks to historicize cosmopolitanism. Whereas Kant sees 'the history of mankind' as 'Nature's secret plan',[48] for James, all sense of the past is necessarily local, subjective, and strongest where it is directly ancestral and therefore intimately personal.

Martha C. Nussbaum finds Kant's 'vision of cosmopolitan politics' to be the culmination of a Western philosophical tradition, of which 'the first step on the road' was, as we have seen, Diogenes' supposed definition of himself as 'a citizen of the world'.[49] This tradition, in which '[t]he image of the dignity of humanity […] is one endpoint of a line that leads to the modern human rights movement',[50] Nussbaum persuasively argues, is flawed on the grounds that it 'scoff[s] at money, rank, and power, saying they are unnecessary for human flourishing. […] Cosmopolitan politics […] imposes no duties of material aid.'[51] In the same vein, Bruce Robbins rightly points out that Appiah's 'eloquent and insightful book *Cosmopolitanism* […] spends […] very little time on obligations to distant others, in particular material obligations.'[52] James, whose participation in Nussbaum's more or less explicitly political cosmopolitan tradition is peripheral, does not scoff at these things, and his cultural politics stem from a realization that it is material wealth that enables such politics to exist.[53] James's

[47] Kant, *On History*, 21.
[48] Kant, *On History*, 21.
[49] Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Cosmopolitan Tradition: A Noble But Flawed Ideal* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Belknap Press, 2019), 1-2.
[50] Nussbaum, *The Cosmopolitan Tradition*, 2.
[51] Nussbaum, *The Cosmopolitan Tradition*, 5.
[52] Bruce Robbins, 'George Orwell, Cosmopolitanism, and Global Justice', in Robbins and Horta, *Cosmopolitanisms*, 40-58 (41).
[53] In Terry Eagleton's words, '[y]ou need […] to be extremely materialist [i.e. to have material wealth] in order to be a cultural idealist.' Eagleton, *The English Novel*, 218.

attempt to historicize cosmopolitanism bears in mind this sometimes inconvenient historical truth, as will be shown in the case of Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove*.

James is concerned with history less as the progress of national self-consciousness and self-government, than as the progress of a higher degree of individual, personal consciousness of freedom, much as Hegel saw it. Nevertheless, James had a desire for a historical order that might help to contextualize, and so enable greater understanding of, the local and personal histories of individuals. It has been suggested that to be liberal in one sense during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was to advocate nationalism for nationally conscious minorities, rather than individual rights or obligations to humanity as a whole.[54] But James does not do this. His liberalism is closer to cosmopolitanism than to sympathy for nationalist independence movements; he stayed aloof from the long-standing debate about Home Rule in Ireland, for instance. For this reason, it is possible to infer that James did have a sense of progress as Kant conceived it, moving towards internationalist reconciliation as opposed to nationalist self-determination. R. G. Collingwood, the English idealist philosopher and historian, explicitly criticizes Kant for using 'mythological language'[55] to describe history (Collingwood presumably refers to Kant's idea of 'a definite natural plan for creatures who have no plan of their own' and his repeated references to 'Nature').[56]

James might at first appear to concur with this disavowal of Kant's quasi-mythological style. Yet James's preference for a localized and personalized sense of the past does not alter the possibility of a mythic, even objective, 'order' in which things do have a kind of clarity when seen in retrospect. History, for James, can be seen provisionally as a kind of *tableau-vivant*, but its goal is to reach a sense of affinity and communality with past lives, rather than simply to see them from the outside. As Kant himself admits, at first glance 'it seems that with such an Idea [of a universal history with a cosmopolitan purpose] only a romance [i.e. a novel] could be written.'[57] For James, the total vision imagined by a Kantian universal history can only exist when history is remoulded into art, whose clarity is compact and fragmentary but symbolic of larger truths. Order, for James, comes from the artistic remoulding of an observed present in touch with a palpable past.

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[54] Will Kymlicka, in *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), correcting a common misconception about the history of liberalism in relation to nationalism, points out that the idea of '[m]inority rights' for nations within pre-existing empires and nation-states 'were an important part of liberal theory and practice in the nineteenth century and between the world wars' (50).
[55] R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (1946; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 104.
[56] Kant, *On History*, 12-13.
[57] Kant, *On History*, 24.

James's aesthetic project *does*, therefore, perform Kant's ethical task of writing a universal history with a cosmopolitan purpose, but this is achieved paradoxically by a reverse process of localizing, subjectifying, and historicizing cosmopolitanism. James moves cosmopolitanism away from what Bruce Robbins and Pablo Lemos Horta, as we have seen, call 'an unhealthily skinny ethical abstraction', and towards a robust place as one of the important driving forces of historical change, fleshed out by concrete individuals (fictionally reimagined) with complex personal histories. James personalizes and historicizes cosmopolitanism by focusing on its ethics considered not in abstraction but as seen through the recurring figure of the 'cosmopolite' character. He is at pains to remind his readers in the 1890s and 1900s that cosmopolitanism is nothing new, even if its fashionable allure has dramatically increased of late; he hints that a historicized cosmopolitanism offers a kind of moral buttress for the sometimes vapid and self-interested social intercourse of his own day. In Chapter 4, I consider the question of how far history can be invested with a cosmopolitan purpose in my analysis of *The Sense of the Past.*

From 1895, when James resumed writing prose fiction after his conspicuous failure to conquer the London stage with his play, *Guy Domville*, his examination of his characters becomes partly a matter of testing their degrees of adaptability, or susceptibility, to the existential dilemma at the heart of cosmopolitanism: how to reconcile the universal with the particular, the necessary with the contingent, the *cosmos* with the *polis*. James Wood has reasonably suggested that whereas 'it often seems that James's characters are not especially vivid as authorial creations', nevertheless 'what makes them vivid is the force of James's interest in them, his manner of pressing into their clay with his examining fingers.'[58] This is truer of James's post-1895 fictions than of his early work; his character examination is deeper, more exacting, and more forceful, after his post-*Guy Domville* resumption of prose fiction, not least because the world these later Jamesian characters inhabit is harsher, denser, and more competitive. But that more complex world does not defeat the idea of teleology, as some critics have maintained was James's artistic purpose. For Daniel Katz, 'it is an encounter with the question of the "foreign" that makes all hermeneutic teleology as such extremely problematic [in James's writings]. Indeed, James's works do nothing if not defeat the teleological readerly impulse'.[59] Certainly, James's works, and his later works especially, are digressive and inconclusive (literally so in the case of *The Sense of the Past*), but this does

[58] James Wood, *How Fiction Works* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2008), 96.
[59] Daniel Katz, 'Aphoristic Patriotics: Henry James and the "Cosmopolite"', *Revue française des études américaines* 92 (2002), 98-111 (100).

not mean that 'the question of the "foreign"' entirely defeats history and literature as things that exist in a teleological pattern. His characters' encounters with foreignness (so to speak) are never so problematic as to be insoluble in terms of history. What resolves them, arguably, is precisely that sense of the past, or 'hermeneutic teleology', which Katz sees as something beyond the Jamesian cosmopolite's grasp.

iv. Characters and sympathies

Novels such as *What Maisie Knew*, realized from the viewpoint of a proto-cosmopolite, *The Wings of the Dove*, the drama of a cosmopolite young woman's vulnerability to others' deceit, and the unfinished *The Sense of the Past*, seen through the eyes of a historian-*manqué*, must be read in the context of James's complex understanding of cosmopolitanism itself as outlined towards the start of this chapter: part identity, part philosophical outlook, and part sensitivity to a changing world and new kinds of experience. This threefold conception of the cosmopolitan finds an early expression in *Maisie*, a novel about the possibility of the containment of ideas and the localization of history as a way of giving meaning to the seemingly new but in fact historically far-reaching force of cosmopolitanism (a word naturally outside Maisie's vocabulary) in a world of bewildering experience. It finds its clearest manifestation in *The Wings of the Dove*, a novel in which history and the cosmopolitan are shown to exist, like the scheming Kate Croy and Merton Densher, in intimate and sometimes surreptitious relation. It then finds alternative, more playful but also more prophetic manifestation in *The Sense of the Past*. These texts are not arbitrarily chosen from James's *oeuvre*; rather, I choose them because they have in common protagonists whose cosmopolitanism is thrust upon them yet is also, to some extent, self-fashioned. Maisie, Milly, and Ralph are all deceived by people around them, but these three characters also show how the fate of being a cosmopolite can be a matter of self-deception. All three novels find in history a forceful, though not failsafe, way out of this problem. I analyse the novels in chronological order of publication because James's dissatisfaction with the early (1900) draft of *The Sense of the Past*, and his putting it to one side, has a significant bearing not only on the writing of *The Ambassadors* (which James began after discarding *The Sense of the Past*), but also on the plotting of *The Wings of the Dove*, in which a sense of the past is no less pertinent to the heroine Milly Theale's cosmopolitan dilemma and its resolution.

The characters from whose points of view James chooses his narratives to unfold are characters whose vitality consists not so much in their immediate memorability (what they

look like, for example, or what they say and do) as in the vitality of the impressions made on them by the people and places around them. Crucially, they are often characters whose cosmopolitanism is not fully realized either morally or practically. Cosmopolitanism may be nascent because the individual is too young in years and ostensibly innocent; or it may be dormant because the individual is too ingenuous and unobservant despite his or her adulthood and the greater freedoms that come with it. The precocity of Maisie in *What Maisie Knew* and the gullibility of Ralph in *The Sense of the Past* provide case studies of the Jamesian proto-cosmopolite and historian-*manqué*, respectively. Maisie's youth does not preclude the possibility that she is cosmopolite in a more reified sense of self-conscious restlessness or rootlessness. It is no coincidence that Ralph's ambition to be a historian is closely connected to cosmopolitanism. The strange accident of Maisie's misfortunes, and the sheer strangeness of Ralph's experiences, point back to James's early opinion that 'to be a cosmopolite is an accident, but one must make the best of it'. These characters are each bound by accident in a way that corroborates James's suggestion that cosmopolitanism might be simply a matter of accident after all, however easily it may, in the 1890s, be aped, parodied, or enabled by money and faster travel.

Just as to be born poor but inquisitive, like Hyacinth Robinson in James's London novel, *The Princess Casamassima*, or the young woman telegraphist in his London novella, 'In the Cage' (1898), is an accident of fate that may or may not be overcome, so to be a 'cosmopolite' by birth or by chance events in one's life is, for James, something that requires resolution, even redemption. It necessitates a search for a way of life that is neither too cosily conformist nor too isolated from human relations and emotions. Of course, cosmopolitanism can be a condition of poverty, too. Silviano Santiago's recent essay 'The Cosmopolitanism of the Poor' (2017) offers an analysis of the Brazilian film, *Voyage to the Beginning of the World* (1997), a diptych in which a pre-industrial peasant farmer and a post-industrial, urban worker are contrasted. Santiago notes how '[b]etween the two poverties – the one prior to and the one following the Industrial Revolution – there exists a revealing *silence* in Manoel de Oliveira's film' (Santiago's emphasis).[60] That cinematic and narrative silence, in which 'there are neither factories nor workers',[61] and industry facilitates the wealth of the middle and upper classes, is a silence that James's fiction, it must be said, shares (and therefore anticipates). Hyacinth Robinson is cosmopolitan by birth (he is the illegitimate, long-lost son

[60] Silviano Santiago, 'The Cosmopolitanism of the Poor', translated by Magdalena Edwards and Pablo Lemos Horta, in Robbins and Horta, *Cosmopolitanisms*, 23-39 (27).
[61] Santiago, 'The Cosmopolitanism of the Poor', 27.

of a travelled aristocrat). He mixes with the international anarchist movement on the one hand and a Europeanized American (Christina Light, the Princess Casamassima) on the other. Yet he is far from being part of an organized industrial proletariat whose internationalism is rooted in labour and demands for the alleviation of poverty. The telegraph girl, similarly, is cosmopolitan only in her imagination; she is isolated from her fellow workers and largely denied human contact, literally trapped in her wire cage. These characters, though poor and indirectly cosmopolitan, demonstrate James's silence on the vast question (in his own day) of the peripatetic, poverty-stricken industrial masses. Yet what James chooses to omit is often a marker in his fiction of that which is conspicuously unsaid, the unspeakable. His omission of industrial squalor and poverty becomes a lens through which the reader (especially the postmodern reader) can interpret the more rarefied characters and worlds presented, just as Santiago interprets Oliveira's film by what is omitted from the narrative.

To be a *literary* cosmopolite, for James, is also a matter of accident; it can even apply to the ostensibly provincial or nationally preoccupied writer. In an 1883 obituary essay, James praises Anthony Trollope for managing, without 'the pedantry of the cosmopolite', to make his fiction 'full of implied reference to the whole arena of modern vagrancy', including the postal service, of which James 'can imagine no experience more fitted to impress a man with the diversity of human relations'.[62] This would equip the telegraph girl of 'In the Cage' with a Trollopean sympathy. If the 'cosmopolite', for James, can be pedantic, Trollope's extensive knowledge of the workings of the Post Office – in Ireland as well as England – gives him a broadmindedness that is in its way equally fitted to understanding 'modern vagrancy', or the chaos of modern life. Trollope's concern with English life is seemingly provincial, but that provincialism is actually tied to a cosmopolitanism of sympathy with the outsider, which James does not designate with the epithet 'cosmopolite'. In spite, then, of James's admitted shying away from the phenomenon of the cosmopolitanism of the poor (a phenomenon of James's day just as it is of the postmodern world), he does not shy away from considering the moral ambiguity of people whose more self-conscious cosmopolitanism directly benefits from the cosmopolitanism of the poor in the industrial age. He also considers people (such as governesses) whose existence straddles the two worlds of autonomous and dependent cosmopolitanism. Such people's sense of self is even more precarious, James implies, than that of the poor.

[62] James, *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers,* 1346.

In the case of both Maisie and Ralph, a sense of self is recalibrated by a sense of the past, without which they (like the poor) exist in a world devoid of the one thing that unites the dispossessed, what Santiago calls 'a common language that transcends words – the language of affection.'[63] A sense of the past is essential to the business of feeling affection for others, as to have kinship with those already dead is to go beyond the power of speech and the confines of current assumptions about the world. If the cosmopolite lacks roots in the sense of one particular place that supersedes others in their own experience and affections, history can go some way towards filling that gap, even where common understanding is incommunicable in words. But this sense of the past is, in one variant, a consciousness of other voices.

The biographical chronology of James's own cosmopolitanism determines the terms and tenor of his literary cosmopolitanism. Adeline R. Tintner, tracing the broad sweep of James's long career, claims that 'James's cosmopolitanism emerged from a linear nationalism' and calls '[h]is kind of cosmopolitanism', seen through his own eyes, 'the final stage and necessary evolution of the international style'.[64] She adds that James's imagination 'became cosmopolitan only after 1890, when James, for almost fifteen years a European resident and writer, was just beginning to become a cosmopolite himself and to lose his American nationalistic bias.'[65] Other critics have followed suit: Jessica Berman claims (as mentioned earlier) that '[b]y the nineties, James has conceived of cosmopolitanism as more than an accident', while Oliver Herford, similarly, finds in 1890 an important turning-point in James's career, as 'through the 1890s and on into the twentieth century James more and more assumed the responsibility of commemorating a passing generation.'[66] I do not wish to dispute this historiography of James, which divides his career into two thematic phases rather than three or more stylistic ones. James's evolution from a self-consciously American observer to a cosmopolite refractor of international society was not a smooth journey, however, and 'the international style' was something that James made uniquely his own.

In 1827, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe had claimed that 'what I call world literature [*Weltliteratur*] develops in the first place when the differences that prevail within one nation

[63] Santiago, 'The Cosmopolitanism of the Poor', 29.
[64] Adeline R. Tintner, *The Cosmopolitan World of Henry James: An Intertextual Study* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1991), 6-7.
[65] Tintner, *The Cosmopolitan World of Henry James*, 9.
[66] Oliver Herford, *Henry James's Style of Retrospect: Late Personal Writings, 1890-1915* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 23.

are resolved through understanding and judgment of the rest.'[67] Goethe thus emphasizes not the resolution of differences (literary, cultural) *between* nations so much as internal differences *within* a nation being resolved by *other* nations. James's 'international style' is concerned with such internal differences as well as international differences. His participation in Goethe's vision of *Weltliteratur* is subtle enough to understand that differences within any nationally defined group are best observed, and resolved, from without, and that the cosmopolitan writer must be a perpetual third party rather than a partisan. This being a third party, however, is something that James attributes to his characters, rather than to himself as narrator. Maisie is a third party, and in this sense *What Maisie Knew* is the first instance of James's fully-fledged cosmopolitanism in the form of a novel. In *Maisie*, James situates the cosmopolitan dilemma as one that, for the naïve cosmopolite, originates in childhood: even a child such as Maisie, with cosmopolitanism thrust upon her, needs some sense of the past in order to give her life meaning if not yet a definite purpose.

v. 'Beyond magic or monsters': playing with difference in *What Maisie Knew*

If 1890 marks a turning-point in James's career, *What Maisie Knew*, completed in 1897, sits at another important crossroads. It is the first novel substantially dictated to a stenographer; it is the first novel in which the action is seen from a child's point of view; and, what has often been missed, it is the first novel in which adult (and here, English) people abroad take it for granted that they are abroad, not seeming very much concerned about the local detail. The novel is readable as an account of Maisie's desire for the imaginative stimulation to which her parents and their circle have become immune, and the need for this stimulation to be constrained, even restrained, in the face of adult reality. It is a cosmopolitan novel from within an apparently closed, provincial set-up, as well as being an account of the external detail of travel. Thomas Bender's notion of cosmopolitanism as experientially grounded, to which I referred in the introduction, is one that certainly appealed to James and to his philosopher brother, William; indeed, Bender situates it theoretically 'within the […] framework of the pragmatism of William James and John Dewey.'[68] It also finds expression in *Maisie*, where cultural 'difference' is reconciled, in Maisie's eyes, partly by direct comparison between what she has already experienced and her new experiences, and partly by an appreciation of the comedy of what she sees. For Beverly Haviland, James in his late

[67] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 'On World Literature (1827)' in *World Literature: A Reader*, edited by Theo D'haen, César Dominguez and Mads Rosendahl Thomsen (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013), 9-15 (11).
[68] Bender, 'The Cosmopolitan Experience and Its Uses', 116-117.

writings 'devotes himself to showing how the intricate play of associated, contiguous differences is crucial to the development of an interesting culture, and, especially, that this play of differences is crucial to making sense of the past.'[69] *Maisie* is a novel about the development of a cosmopolitan mindset sustained by such 'play of differences', a childish play but one that anticipates a more adult seriousness.

The practical use of such a perception of cultural difference can be overstated, however. James anticipates, among other things, the way in which platitudinous notions of cultural diversity have come, in the postmodern world, not only to mask but to intensify the class difference that keeps 'cultural difference', as a discursive product, intact. Maisie is the only child of rich parents, and her dependence on her governess, Mrs Wix, symbolizes the class system that props up the cosmopolitanized modern world. 'Cultural difference' in the 1890s is, among other things, a commodity that is marketed to the rich, just as it is in the twenty-first century; but its commodification occurs in subtler ways, ways that Maisie's natural inquisitiveness leads her to puzzle out.[70] There are, nevertheless, ethical models in Maisie's world that the twenty-first-century world has implicitly devalued. Elleke Boehmer, considering the point of view of colonial subjects at the time in which *Maisie* was written, points out that '[w]riting in all forms, not forgetting journalism, allowed [late nineteenth-century] colonial Indians, especially those who were migrants, not merely to articulate their experiences of migration but also to give those journeys imaginative shape.'[71] A similar experience of reading applies to Maisie's reception of fiction, both in London and, later, in Boulogne. Maisie learns to deal with the 'world of difference' in part through her associations with that other 'world of difference', the realm of fiction. Appiah, arguing against strict cultural relativism, notes the importance of an empathic imagination to cosmopolitanism's enduring value: 'Folktales, drama, opera, novels, short stories; biographies, histories, ethnographies; fiction or nonfiction; painting, music, sculpture, and dance: every human civilization has ways to reveal to us values we had not previously recognized or undermine our commitment to values that we had settled into.'[72] Fiction is a

[69] Beverly Haviland, *Henry James's Last Romance: Making Sense of the Past and the American Scene* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 10.
[70] Walter Benn Michaels suggests, in a recent essay on American universities, that 'inasmuch as the [present day] investment in cultural difference already involves […] a certain acquiescence in what has turned out to be the intensification of class difference, […] choosing culture really is a way of choosing class – but maybe (from the point of view of social justice) the wrong class.' Walter Benn Michaels, 'Cosmopolitanism Goes to Class', in Robbins and Horta, *Cosmopolitanisms*, 59-64 (63).
[71] Elleke Boehmer, 'Cosmopolitan Exchanges: Scenes of Colonial and Postcolonial Reading', in Robbins and Horta, *Cosmopolitanisms*, 108-115 (109).
[72] Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, 30.

storehouse of 'ideas' proceeding from the imagination; indeed, James sometimes uses the word 'imagination' to mean an idea itself, as Terence Cave has noted, thus blurring the boundary between the act of imagining and the thing imagined.[73] James also makes character development, in the sense of the character's expanding imagination (the *raison d'être* of Jamesian character development), parallel the consumption of stories.

In *What Maisie Knew*, Mrs Wix exists at the periphery of the text, as opposed to Maisie who sits at the centre.[74] She tells stories to Maisie aloud and from memory. This strategy becomes part of the narrative itself, as Mrs Wix arranges her stories, or 'subjects', according to a similar dialectic of centre and circumference:

> They dealt, the governess and her pupil, in 'subjects', but there were many the governess put off from week to week and that they never got to at all: she only used to say, 'We'll take that in its proper order.' Her order was a circle as vast as the untravelled globe. She had not the spirit of adventure—the child could perfectly see how many subjects she was afraid of. She took refuge on the firm ground of fiction, through which indeed there curled the blue river of truth. She knew swarms of stories, mostly those of the novels she had read; relating them with a memory that never faltered and a wealth of detail that was Maisie's delight. They were all about love and beauty and countesses and wickedness. Her conversation was practically an endless narrative, a great garden of romance, with sudden vistas into her own life and gushing fountains of homeliness. These were the parts where they most lingered; she made the child take with her again every step of her long, lame course and think it beyond magic or monsters.[75]

Despite the comic grotesqueness of Mrs Wix (James's low-key humour is always present where she is present), her desire for 'proper order' is that of a practising historian, and of James the novelist. Her stories, however, get ahead of themselves, and never rearrange themselves satisfactorily.

Just as it is the novelist's unique job, for James, 'eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which [relations] shall happily *appear* to [stop]',[76] so it is Mrs Wix's self-appointed job to draw a circle within which propriety and moral instruction, as well as

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[73] Terence Cave, *Thinking with Literature: Towards a Cognitive Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 48.

[74] Alex Woloch's study of minor characters in the novel, *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), notes that James, unlike other novelists, 'constructs a dialectical relationship between "center" and "circumference" where the inner consciousness of the putative protagonist […] constitutes only "half" of the narrative' (21). Woloch takes *The Wings of the Dove*, with Milly Theale at its 'centre', as a prime example (21-26). But *Maisie* provides a more interesting example of this strategy.

[75] Henry James, *What Maisie Knew* [1897], edited with an introduction and notes by Adrian Poole (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 32.

[76] James, *Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers, Prefaces to the New York Edition*, 1041.

entertainment, are generously offered to Maisie. But this 'circle', Maisie finds, is 'as vast as the untravelled globe'. The 'sudden vistas into Mrs Wix's own life' are 'the parts where they most lingered': Mrs Wix tends to return to her own centre of consciousness, and in this sense, Maisie becomes, while listening to Mrs Wix's stories, the 'circumference' to Mrs Wix's 'centre'. Similarly, Mrs Wix does not take a linear view of Maisie's education, but sees it in terms of concentric circles. This is an unconsciously cosmopolitan attitude. Maisie may be the principal voyager in the novel, but Mrs Wix, her main interlocutor and instructor, is, despite lacking 'the spirit of adventure', her closest guide. James had read Dickens voraciously as a child, and it is no accident, in view of the novel's Dickensian overtones, that Mrs Wix, although comically provincial and gently mocked by the narrator, is the moral and intellectual opposite of a character such as Mrs Jellyby in Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853), whose globalist humanitarianism is self-conscious but woefully compromised by the unnoticed poverty of her own neighbourhood. Here is a strange and unexpected place in which to find a cosmopolitan ethic: the mind and behaviour of a comic, 'flat' character, Mrs Wix, who like Hyacinth Robinson could well be described as 'one of the disinherited, the expropriated'.[77]

On another level, the paragraph sustains a cosmopolitanism of its own through James's linguistic choices. James omits from direct speech the 'endless narrative' of Mrs Wix's conversation; the narrator describes but does not give examples of it. This omission has the uncanny effect of merging Mrs Wix's conversational style as received and described by the narrator ('endless narrative', 'great garden of romance', 'sudden vistas', 'gushing fountains') with her conversation as it might be received and described more literally by Maisie ('all about love and beauty and countesses and wickedness'). The predominant narrative voice – the normative, urban, Jamesian, showing-not-telling voice – stands for *a priori* judgement, whereas the dialogically distinct sentence, 'They were all about love and beauty and countesses and wickedness', stands, *a posteriori*, for Maisie's filtered, subjective, impressionistic paraphrase of what she hears. The subtle co-existence of different voices here serves to emphasize Maisie's paradoxical mixture of ostensible innocence and incremental knowingness. 'Swarms of stories', contemporary children's slang though it is, suggests something almost menacing about Mrs Wix's mentality, as though the stories are insects threatening to sting Maisie; and how could Maisie be entirely innocent if she can so easily

[77] Henry James, *The Princess Casamassima* [1886], edited with an introduction by Derek Brewer and notes by Patricia Crick (London: Penguin, 1986) 120.

place ‘wickedness’ next to ‘countesses’? She does not see these things as antitheses, but as things of equivalent weight and value, at least in the scheme of fiction. The collocation of ‘wickedness’ and ‘countesses’ ironically foreshadows the amorality of the adult characters, people who treat these things as interchangeable, even indistinguishable.

The narrator goes on to mention that Mrs Wix’s husband ‘had been rather remarkably absent from his wife’s career, and Maisie was never taken to see his grave.’[78] This revelation, also uncanny in its hint that Maisie lacks a father just as Mrs Wix lacks her husband, returns to the theme of absence, a favourite theme of James’s. But it also refers to the idea of a ‘career’ as one way of viewing the ‘cosmopolite’ experience. The sarcasm of the narrator’s tone risks blotting out Mrs Wix’s redeeming quality, her sense of duty towards Maisie, her surrogate daughter. Mrs Wix’s career may be professional, domestic, even humble, but it is also self-fashioned in the degree to which she guides Maisie’s development with her ‘endless narrative’, her extrapolation of the fictional from lived experience and of lived experience from fiction. The oxymoronic image of ‘gushing fountains of homeliness’ emphasizes this productive confusion between fact and fiction. In a psychoanalytic sense, both Maisie and Mrs Wix appear to suffer from the trauma of absent relatives; but fiction, in providing a consolation for an absent network of emotional support, also cosmopolitanizes them both. Mrs Wix is no less caught up in the drama of Maisie’s parents and their hangers-on than Maisie herself; but she has a latent worldliness deriving from the influence of fiction upon her moral outlook.

Mrs Wix’s understanding of fiction is escapist and romantic, but it is also functional, for she makes Maisie think of true stories and their parallels with the fictional narratives she retells. Mrs Wix’s desire to push Maisie ‘beyond magic or monsters’ is not merely the effect of puritanical piety, though that is, we must assume, one aspect of her motive. It is also influenced by a desire to focus Maisie’s mind on the imaginative significance of the problems of this world, to which fiction holds a mirror up only intermittently. The ‘monsters’, in the shape of her selfish parents and their new spouses, loom more largely in Maisie’s world than does ‘magic’; but magic is also close to hand in the form of travel, of all the vivid impressions produced by an exploration of new scenes taking place in new scenery. ‘Magic and monsters’ are metaphors for things – places and people – that reveal themselves within Maisie’s socialized experience. Indeed, the ‘magic’ of nature and culture, especially in Boulogne, serves as a more than adequate substitute for the ‘monsters’ who are her adult

[78] James, *Maisie*, 32.

relations. Sir Claude and Mrs Wix are not enough for Maisie; she needs to understand something of the geographical and historical context out of which the interminable adult erotic imbroglio has emerged.

This becomes more apparent the further one reads. *Maisie* may be usefully subdivided into 'Maisie at home' (the first twenty-one chapters if 'home', provisionally, means London) and 'Maisie abroad' (chapter twenty-two onwards). In Boulogne, Maisie's impressions are vivid, but they become comparative; to be impressed, she finds, is to form relative value judgements about France and England:

> To drive on the long cliff was splendid, but it was perhaps better still to creep in the shade—for the sun was strong—along the many-coloured and many-odoured *port* and through the street in which, to English eyes, everything that was the same was a mystery and everything that was different a joke.[79]

The infinitive verbs ('to drive', 'to creep') reinforce the sense of Maisie testing things out, as though all things and actions have yet to be, as it were, conjugated. This use of infinitive verbs is, stylistically, a kind of universalism: without personalizing pronouns or tenses, these verbs encompass everyone's potential experience; they also refresh that experience by making it seem new. As Seymour Chatman has noted, James may very often '*nominalize*' verbs, especially psychological ones, in his late fiction,[80] but here, in a stylistically transitional work, his use of the infinitive for non-psychological verbs gives an accurate idea of a child's approach to the new, strange, and delightful. The dilemma of how to reconcile the universal and the particular is comically rendered through Maisie's inexperienced if precocious eyes, which in Boulogne are English before they are (for example) childish or feminine. Maisie realizes that comedy is largely dependent on incongruity and deals in the unexpected; to laugh without malice at something, consequently, is to assimilate its foreignness, to render it familiar as part of a pattern of laughter. Sameness in an apparently foreign context is the more troubling mystery. Although Maisie's musings incorporate the French word 'port', italicized by James to show both its difference from and its sameness to the English, in reality, she expects to find only difference abroad. To find some repetition of patterns absorbed in England is a puzzle she does not have time to resolve during her stay in France. The universal ('everything that was the same') and the particular ('everything that was different') are to some degree irreconcilable, although it is no small part of Maisie's proto-cosmopolitanism that this dilemma is itself already present to her.

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[79] James, *Maisie*, 206.
[80] Seymour Chatman, *The Later Style of Henry James* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972), 22.

vi. ‘The historic imagination’: Boulogne and historicized cosmopolitanism

Boulogne is a place where historical associations form a substantial proportion of the overall impressions, both the narrator’s and Maisie’s. The latter’s confrontation with a new culture is almost coterminous with her burgeoning sense of the past. Maisie finds ‘a part of the place that could lead her to enquire if it didn’t just meet one’s idea of the middle ages’, noticing with ‘satisfaction’ ‘the limits in Mrs Wix’s mind of the historic imagination’.[81] This conscious correspondence between topography and the idea of history was an experience that James regarded as formative in his own life; it altered his definitions of words, destroying their seeming permanence as mediators between mind and world. In his first autobiographical volume, *A Small Boy and Others* (1913), James recalls finding in a Boulogne street, like Maisie, ‘a place of particular arrest in the vista brief and blank, blank *after* ancient, settled, more and more subsiding things, blank almost, in short, with all Matthew Arnold’s “ennui of the middle ages,” rather than, poorly and meanly and emptily, before such states, which was previously what I had most known of blankness.’[82] Here, James’s Arnoldian notion of ‘blankness’, modifying both the word and the experience, is evidence of a strong ‘historic imagination’, an ability to evoke much from what appears to be little. This ability is one that James gives to Maisie, who performs the same feat of extrapolating ‘the middle ages’ from a single street in a way that does not occur to the historically incurious Mrs Wix.

A Small Boy and Others ends with the young James falling ‘into a lapse of consciousness’ in Boulogne, an event that the adult, narrating James decides ‘conveniently’ to ‘treat as a considerable gap’ to be resumed in the next volume.[83] This cliff-hanger appears more than simply convenient, however, when compared with the ending of *Maisie*:

> They [Maisie and Mrs Wix] caught the steamer, which was just putting off, and, hustled across the gulf, found themselves on the deck so breathless and so scared that they gave up half their voyage to letting their emotion sink. It sank slowly and imperfectly; but at last, in mid-channel, surrounded by the quiet sea, Mrs Wix had courage to revert. ‘I didn’t look back, did you?’
>
> ‘Yes, he wasn’t there,’ said Maisie.
>
> ‘Not on the balcony?’
>
> Maisie waited a moment; then ‘He wasn’t there’ she simply said again.
>
> Mrs Wix was silent a while. ‘He went to *her*,’ she finally observed.

[81] James, *Maisie*, 206.
[82] James, *Autobiographies*, 248.
[83] James, *Autobiographies*, 250.

> ‘Oh I know!’ the child replied.
>
> Mrs Wix gave a sidelong look. She still had room for wonder at what Maisie knew.[84]

Like the young James in Boulogne, who just before he faints has ‘the strange sense that something had begun that would make more difference to me, directly and indirectly, than anything had ever yet made’, and is in that moment ‘much impressed but half scared’,[85] Maisie’s narrative ends just as ‘something had begun’. She is caught halfway: between Sir Claude and Mrs Wix, between France and England, between knowledge and doubt, between fear and courage, between consciousness and oblivion. Maisie’s future, ostensibly with Mrs Wix, is really, by implication, the fate of an accidental ‘cosmopolite’ shifted around between irresponsible adults, and she is thereby made to reconcile, in her own mind, their seemingly insurmountable differences of personal interest. James’s cosmopolitanism blurs the boundary between history and fiction, in the sense that his own experience as retrospectively recorded has an intermittent existence in a fictional text. In the time of its composition and its fictional historical reach, *Maisie* sits ambiguously somewhere between James’s 1850s childhood and the 1913 retrospect that records it undisguisedly in *A Small Boy*.

Maisie’s listening to Mrs Wix’s stories in London also has its Boulogne parallel, in her implied perusal of French novels, ‘one yellow and two pink’,[86] bought by Sir Claude at a bookstall. Paralleling the description of the younger Maisie as ‘a deep little porcelain cup in which biting acids could be mixed’,[87] the slightly older Maisie seems to be exposed to a mixture of what was considered proper and improper reading material for young girls (Adrian Poole has noted that ‘this colour-code marked the difference in France between reading for “adults” and for “children”’,[88] though this is open to question). Although Sir Claude tells Maisie that ‘the yellow one [is] for Mrs Beale’, there is little doubt, in view of the adults’ laxness, that Maisie will read the yellow book in due course, without parental objection and in spite of Mrs Wix’s overbearing concern for what she calls Maisie’s ‘moral sense’.[89] If the books do indeed designate ‘adult’ and ‘children’s’ reading material, the proper (pink) here outweighs the improper (yellow) by two to one. This is symbolic of Maisie’s transmutation of adult knowledge (or knowledge of adults) into a positive purpose, rather than of what F. R.

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[84] James, *Maisie*, 275.
[85] James, *Autobiographies*, 250.
[86] James, *Maisie*, 261.
[87] James, *Maisie*, 15.
[88] James, *Maisie*, 284.
James, *Maisie*, 268.

Leavis, protesting too much, called her 'incorruptible innocence'.[90] Maisie is not incorruptibly innocent but knowingly adaptable, and listening to stories, even more than reading them in private, is shown to be an ethical model for life, one which presupposes a free and open citizenship of the world. Yet even Maisie's 'private' reading is not, by implication, surreptitious; she does not follow her elders' habit of secrecy and its attendant hypocrisy. It is they, on the contrary, who project their own habitual secrecy onto her: Mrs Beale's parting remark to Maisie is, 'I don't know what to make of you!',[91] and even Mrs Wix, her most faithful guardian, 'still ha[s] room for wonder' at Maisie's imputed knowledge.[92]

If Maisie's knowledge is ultimately unknowable to the reader, the novel itself deals with reading as a way of categorizing, containing, and ordering knowledge. The portrait of Boulogne in *Maisie* springs from James's memories of his own childhood, a time he repeatedly associates with Dickens and Thackeray. In *A Small Boy*, James elaborates this Boulogne atmosphere as he remembers it. In particular, he remembers 'little English ladies' who resided there and who came to signify a great deal in hindsight:

> These mid-Victorian samples of a perfect consistency "represented," by my measure, as hard as ever they could—and represented, of all things, literature and history and society. The literature was that of the three-volume novel, then, and for much after, enjoying its loosest and serenest spread; for they separately and anxiously and awfully "wrote"—and that must almost by itself have amounted in them to all the history I evoked.[93]

What is most fascinating about this analysis is James's collocation of 'literature and history and society'. These entities, in James's evocation, form a kind of trinity, united and embodied in the English ladies who write the same kind of literature that they read, voluminous productions that James, in the Prefaces to the New York Edition of his fiction, famously calls 'large loose baggy monsters'.[94] James's evocation of this aspect of the recent past implies that English ladies' writing was, and therefore *is*, their lives, and their lives in this sense equivalent to the 'history' James 'evoke[s]'. In a Hegelian sense, history for James is the history of what has been thought and felt, from which historical events proceed. For Hegel, 'to *explain* History is to depict the passions of mankind, the genius, the active powers, that

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[90] Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, 156.
[91] James, *Maisie*, 274.
[92] James, *Maisie*, 275.
[93] James, *Autobiographies*, 246.
[94] James, *Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers, Prefaces to the New York Edition*, 1107.

play their part on the great stage' (Hegel's emphasis).[95] Literature, the depiction of mankind's thoughts and passions, is an aspect of history that James sees to have been neglected by the historians of his own day. Nevertheless, Fredric Jameson's Marxist argument that James (like all writers) is an unconscious ideologue, whose 'invention of point of view […] is a genuinely historical act' and 'part of the more general containment strategy of a late nineteenth-century bourgeoisie struggling with the after-effects of reification [of the text]',[96] goes too far. It is misleading to assume that James's changing style and narrative practices are merely unconscious defence mechanisms against the disintegration of the bourgeois subject. But what Jameson does catch is James's intuitive understanding, expressed consciously in *A Small Boy*, that the three-volume novel even at 'its loosest and serenest spread' was produced from a kind of neurotic desire for self-justification. The English ladies write 'separately and anxiously and awfully' rather than at leisure.

The three-volume novel is an obvious metaphor for both the containment and the loose spread of ideas. In *A Small Boy*, James goes on to make the case that the three-volume format, obsolete by 1913, had an inbuilt potential to mitigate whatever artistic failings the specific novel might have had:

> When the novel of that age was "bad," as it so helplessly, so abjectly and prevailingly consented to be, the three volumes still did something for it, a something that was, all strangely, not an aggravation of its case. When it was "good" (our analysis, our terms of appreciation, had a simplicity that has lingered on) they made it copiously, opulently better […][97]

Form, in the novel, has the power to alleviate a lack of interesting subject-matter, and the three-volume format, James maintains, lends it a kind of serenity that the one-volume format is denied. The three-volume format is part of the antiquated Boulogne in *Maisie*; but it is also a metaphor for the reconciliation of the individual point of view with the spread of ideas.

The earlier, supposedly calmer world of the three-volume novel, although not emphasized in *Maisie*, forms an ironic backdrop to it: part of James's agenda in *A Small Boy* is to rehabilitate the voluminous novel as a worthy cultural artefact. *Maisie*, published only three years after the three-volume novel's demise, is self-consciously compact in length and point of view. But this itself is ironized: one of the ironies of the Boulogne part of the novel is that Maisie needs more time than she is given to take everything in; the adult intrigue in which

[95] Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 13.
[96] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981; London: Routledge, 2006), 209.
[97] James, *Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers, Prefaces to the New York Edition*, 1107.

she is caught up distracts her from a full appreciation of the novelty of being in another country. A three-volume novel, James subtly hints, would allow Maisie this fuller appreciation; but the world has changed, and the novel must change with it. The three individual volumes purchased by Sir Claude, cheap, stand-alone paperbacks, not all of them deemed suitable for young readers, thus form an ironic modern counterpart to the robust and respectable three-volume novel of the earlier period, and show how James felt the literary marketplace to have become cheapened, if in some ways the literature had greatly improved, in the newly mass-consumerist and interconnected 1890s.

Although we are told that on seeing Boulogne for the first time, Maisie 'had grown older in five minutes', her receptiveness to its 'multitude of affinities and messages' depends, at first, on her innocent enjoyment of them.[98] She supposes, naively, that 'no one since the beginning of time could have had such an adventure or, in an hour, so much experience'.[99] Then, presumably inspired by the fiction she has read, she asks Sir Claude 'to name the moment at which they should start for Paris', supposing this to be 'the *real* thing' to do 'when one does come abroad'.[100] But this is met with protests from Sir Claude, and Maisie's idea of 'abroad' is altered accordingly. Paradoxically, Paris, the cultural capital of the world in 1897, is provincialized by its inconvenient expensiveness, its distance from Boulogne and London, and its lack of exoticism when compared with South Africa, where Maisie believes her mother to be now living.

Only Maisie, on first arriving in Boulogne, has a conscious sense of being 'abroad': 'she gave herself up to it, responded to it […] Her vocation was to see the world and to thrill with enjoyment of the picture'.[101] 'Magic' has temporarily overlaid 'monsters', but the monsters are unresponsive to the magic, and one of Maisie's acquisitions in Boulogne is the knowledge that people are connected by communication – communication of subjective thoughts and feelings – rather than by any objective, simultaneously apprehended and appreciated outer reality. Maisie learns this just before the purchase of the pink and yellow books:

> On the way over to the station she had even a mental picture of the stepfather and the pupil [Sir Claude and herself] established in a little place in the South while the governess and the stepmother

[98] James, *Maisie*, 180.
[99] James, *Maisie*, 181.
[100] James, *Maisie*, 181.
[101] James, *Maisie*, 180.

> [Mrs Wix and Mrs Beale], in a little place in the North, remained linked by a community of blankness and by the endless series of remarks it would give birth to.[102]

The geographical vagueness of 'South' and 'North' – is Maisie thinking of the regions of France, of Europe, even of the Northern and Southern hemispheres? – combined with the image of 'a community of blankness', with its echo of the idea of a blankness of *ennui* that James in *A Small Boy* takes from Matthew Arnold, is a reminder that one kind of cosmopolitanism presupposes direct communication between people, even if such communication is hazardous or counter-intuitive. Lack of direction in life only matters if there is a resultant breakdown of communication, and when that occurs, cosmopolitanism has lost one of its driving forces; Arnoldian *ennui*, personal or historical, takes over. One thing the 'cosmopolite' is not is gravely silent (though silence may also suggest an unspoken affection). Such a grave silence, the silence of history with which George Eliot deliberately surrounds the garrulous action of *Romola*, cannot be made to surround the action of *Maisie*. Mrs Wix's 'room for wonder' is less profound, more personal, than Eliot's silence; but it is not an epistemological dead-end. The room for wonder is symbolically gifted to Maisie; the circumference of her mind, unlike the globe, may be enlarged.

Maisie's concern with geography is subtly related to contemporary ideas of literary cosmopolitanism. Stefano Evangelista and Richard Hibbitt, discussing Joseph Texte's 1895 seminal literary historical work, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et les origines du cosmopolitisme littéraire*, make the point that 'Texte's conception of literary cosmopolitanism rests […] on the premise that it originates from the French willingness to open up the various literatures of "northern" Europe, which by extension implies that "le genie français" [the French genius] is representative of the Latin and Greek classical traditions.'[103] Maisie, in her slight way, perceives the interconnectedness of 'North' and 'South', even as the two words are non-specific in the narrative. The two sets of people, and the two places, will 'remain linked by a community of blankness', the narrator claims. Yet 'the endless series of remarks it would give birth to' is analogous to the way in which literature in the nineteenth century was, in Texte's analysis (following Goethe's), enriched by communication and an interplay of remarks and appreciations. The 'ongoing importance of the cosmopolitan ideal in the 1800s'[104] is evident in *Maisie*, where the child's point of view is not only a blank canvas but

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[102] James, *Maisie*, 260.
[103] Stefano Evangelista and Richard Hibbitt, 'Guest Editors' Introduction', in *Comparative Critical Literature* 10:2 (2013) ('Fin-de-Siècle Cosmopolitanism'), 123-138 (125).
[104] Evangelista and Hibbitt, 'Guest Editors' Introduction', 126.

a focus for the personalization of a cosmopolitan ideal that survives in literature, and in literary exchange, as much as anywhere else.

Maisie's point of view is not, therefore, somehow a part of the bourgeois James's incipient schizophrenia, a neurotic response to the reification of the novel as text. Rather, it is the bourgeois subject given new life and new horizons. Maisie is a proto-cosmopolite rather than a proto-neurotic, and James's change of technique is a composed artistic choice to reform the novel in accordance with a cosmopolitanism of particularism, or the child's response to particular, unfamiliar stimuli. As we have seen, Oliver Elton, one of the first serious critics of James, claimed in 1907, some years before James became naturalized as a British subject, that James 'is not a cosmopolitan, even yet; he never was one. He is better; he understands other countries, but does not adopt them'. Elton equates cosmopolitanism with the 'adopt[ion]' of other countries, and 'understand[ing]' them with something else, which he does not explain. But James collapses Elton's distinction between understanding and adopting. His cosmopolitanism is vital precisely because he adopts other countries *through* understanding them at one remove, the remove of the novelist-historian. To 'adopt' other countries in the sense of making them familiar and unremarkable would be to lose that sense of child-like playing with difference that sustains the comedy and the pathos of *Maisie* and gives its cosmopolitan drama an extra, rejuvenating dimension.

This playing with difference establishes the background, as it were, of the adult sexual and social intrigue of *The Wings of the Dove*, where characters' adoption of other countries and other people, lacking understanding and sympathy, is shown to be morally destructive. Milly Theale, like Maisie, becomes prey to others' failure to see the history that justifies, or redeems, their own cosmopolitanism. History, in drawing attention to the commonality between the experienced present and the palpable past (the present as it was once experienced by others), can make cosmopolitanism valid and worthwhile. By the same token, however, the force of history, having caused certain people – such as Milly – to be cast on the desolate shores of cosmopolitanism, excuses the negative aspects of cosmopolitanism, the perceived absence of roots and allegiances. Milly, also like Maisie, needs history both to warrant and to excuse her cosmopolitan predicament in its positive and negative aspects. Although *Maisie* is more obviously paired with *The Awkward Age* (1899), James's novel of female adolescence in English society, the novel can also be paired with *The Wings of the Dove.* Maisie and Mrs Wix in the earlier novel are neatly echoed by Milly and her chaperone, Mrs Stringham, in the later work. In both novels, the naïve cosmopolite protagonist is sheltered, guided, but

ultimately misinterpreted, by the older guardian. As I explain in the following chapter, it is no coincidence that this misunderstanding, in both cases, rests on a flawed interpretation of the immediate – and the remoter – past.

Chapter 4: 'Wild cosmopolite backward generations': cosmopolitanism, history, and the force of experience in *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Sense of the Past*

i. 'Wild cosmopolite backward generations': *The Wings of the Dove*

Whilst it has been argued by Richard Freadman that 'a comparison of *Romola and The Wings of the Dove* reveals just how different the two senses of history [Eliot's and James's] were',[1] the significance of history is a largely overlooked aspect of *The Wings of the Dove,* the first published and most melodramatic of James's three 'late' novels. One reason for this, Freadman suggests, is that 'the past does not in James possess the power to explain the present that it has in such a novel as *Romola*.'[2] Indeed, *The Wings of the Dove* appears to exist in a kind of historical vacuum: not only is the date of the novel's setting indeterminate, but Milly Theale, the doomed heroine, commands great attention from people whose conception of her and of themselves is largely ahistorical. It is as though she is already dead, or a ghost, whose legacy may be plundered (although no-one knows, at first, of her incipient illness). With the exception of Mrs Stringham, their interest in her is locked in the immediacy of the present with its vested interests (notably Milly's money).

But James's sense of the past, and of the provisionality of all knowledge, is everywhere in *The Wings of the Dove*, beginning with Mrs Stringham, Milly's companion. Mrs Stringham's impressions of Milly, which introduce Milly to the reader, are prefaced by an ironic description of Mrs Stringham that has the effect of throwing her understanding of Milly into immediate doubt:

> She moved, the admirable Mrs Stringham, in a fine cloud of observation and suspicion; she was in the position, as she believed, of knowing much more about Milly Theale than Milly herself knew, and yet of having to darken her knowledge as well as make it active.[3]

Mrs Stringham's 'fine cloud' is indeed cloudy: she does not know much more about Milly than Milly herself knows, and certainly does not know, at this point, about her incipient disease or her vulnerability to scheming from people who appear to care for her wholeheartedly, people such as Kate Croy and Merton Densher. '[H]aving to darken her knowledge' is suggestive of the darkness of ignorance; it is almost euphemistic of ignorance itself.

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[1] Richard Freadman, *Eliot, James and the Fictional Self: A Study in Character and Narration* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 232.
[2] Freadman, *Eliot, James and the Fictional Self*, 232.
[3] Henry James, *The Wings of the Dove* [1902], edited with an introduction by John Bayley and notes by Patricia Crick (London: Penguin, 1986), 121.

What Mrs Stringham does sense, however, on first seeing Milly in Boston, is the significance of her past (specifically her New York past), and its inseparability from the immediate impression created by her 'exceptionally red' hair and 'remarkably black' mourning clothes.[4] In this sense, Mrs Stringham becomes the necessary exception to the rule of characters whose conception of Milly is ahistorical. She links Milly to a recent but tragic past:

> It was New York mourning, it was New York hair, it was a New York history, confused as yet, but multitudinous, of the loss of parents, brothers, sisters, almost every human appendage, all on a scale and with a sweep that required the greater stage; it was a New York legend of affecting, of romantic isolation, and, beyond everything, it was by most accounts, in respect to the mass of money so piled on the girl's back, a set of New York possibilities.[5]

The past, Milly's 'history', is tied inextricably to 'the greater stage' of the present, and her 'legend of affecting, of romantic isolation' is inseparable from her unspecified future 'possibilities'. There is no possibility of separating these things; Milly involuntarily merges past, present, and future. New York, whose very name certifies the city's sense of its own perpetual novelty and freshness, is both a place where history and cosmopolitanism are almost the same thing, and a place where 'possibilities' accumulate, a nexus of the future.

In subtle ways, James also merges Mrs Stringham's immediate and extrapolated impressions of Milly. The Latinate adjective 'multitudinous' is used apparently to describe Milly's 'history'. As Virginia Woolf pointed out in her essay 'Craftsmanship' (1927), the word 'multitudinous' is inevitably associated in the Shakespeare-conscious reader's mind with the 'multitudinous seas incarnadine' of *Macbeth*.[6] If Woolf is correct, the educated contemporary reader of James would here associate 'multitudinous' with the blood red of 'seas incarnadine'. The word therefore becomes ominous of Milly's death, anticipated by Kate and Densher, a pair who have often been likened by critics to the Macbeths.[7] By the same token, the word is associated with the exceptional redness of Milly's hair. Ironically, however, rather than 'making the green one red',[8] Kate and Densher will make the red one, Milly, green, by accelerating her illness and hastening her death: as Milly herself admits when confronting her historical double, the Bronzino portrait, 'Of course her complexion's green,'

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[4] James, *Wings*, 123.
[5] James, *Wings*, 123.
[6] Virginia Woolf, 'Craftsmanship' [1927], in *Selected Essays*, edited with an introduction and notes by David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 85-91 (88).
[7] For instance, John Bayley in his introduction to the novel (James, *Wings*, 14).
[8] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, II.ii.60, in *The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 977.

[…] 'but mine's several shades greener.'[9] James's use of 'multitudinous', ironically carrying these associations, gives further background, as it were, to the immediacy of Milly's physical presence, a resonance over and above Mrs Stringham's associating Milly's appearance with her personal history, specifically her 'loss of […] almost every human appendage'. To find new 'human appendage[s]' is partly her reason, one senses, for visiting Europe in the first place, with Mrs Stringham her self-appointed chaperone.

That Milly's attributes 'required the greater stage' may be obvious to Mrs Stringham, but what 'the greater stage' constitutes is open to question. As we read, the implication grows that Europe (synecdochically represented by London and Venice) supplies that stage, and furthermore that New York, despite Milly's 'set of New York possibilities', is insufficient as a stage for her great potential. But the irony to come is that not even Europe with its rich history can match the significance of Milly's implied history; Milly's history is a history of loss, and, except in Venice (which James associates with mourning), Europe's long history of gain and enrichment is overwhelming for someone who associates the past with misfortune, and whose material acquisition (her inherited millions) is predicated on premature loss and bereavement. Despite this, Milly's family history, although apparently taking tragic turns during Milly's lifetime, is described in terms which suggest the predominance of a highly American spirit of self-advancement that Milly has inherited alongside her fortune. Milly, to Mrs Stringham, is at once 'a girl with a background' (the language of portraiture skilfully unites present and past, and anticipates her confrontation with the Bronzino portrait) and 'the potential heiress of all the ages' (the dramatic irony of 'potential' is essential to the tragedy of the narrative).[10]

Mrs Stringham, in New York, is spurred by the spirit of the place towards 'possession of her subject', Milly:

> New York was vast, New York was startling, with strange histories, with wild cosmopolite backward generations that accounted for anything; and to have got nearer the luxuriant tribe of which the rare creature [Milly] was the final flower, the immense extravagant unregulated cluster, with free-living ancestors, handsome dead cousins, lurid uncles, beautiful vanished aunts, persons all busts and curls, preserved, though so exposed, in the marbles of French chisels—all this, to say nothing of the effect of closer growths of the stem, was to have had one's small world-space both crowded and enlarged.[11]

[9] James, *Wings*, 197.
[10] James, *Wings*, 125.
[11] James, *Wings*, 126.

The immensity and contingency of New York as perceived by Mrs Stringham ('vast' and 'startling'), will seem at odds, later, with the seemingly more ordered (because visibly and tangibly older) history of Europe. '[T]o have had one's small world-space both crowded and enlarged' is one of the paradoxes of cosmopolitanism: the world seems both smaller and larger; denser and more 'crowded' but also 'enlarged' by new horizons. Mrs Stringham's cosmopolitanism, having passed through what looks like a rite of passage in New York, is essentially vicarious. Consequently, it is from her suggestible vantage point as Milly's guardian that Milly's interest, as a character vulnerable to the amorality of other people, is first and most effectively delineated to the reader.

The narrator's description of the 'wild cosmopolite backward generations' of Mrs Stringham's imagination nevertheless provides the reader with a clear reminder that to be a 'cosmopolite' is not a condition exclusive to 1900, and that New York, of all places, has its history *in* cosmopolitanism. To be 'cosmopolite' in earlier generations, particularly where New York was concerned, was to participate in a buccaneering and 'free-living' acquisitive 'wild'(ness) somewhat at odds with the connotations of refinement and leisure that the cosmopolitan identity had come to acquire by the end of the nineteenth century. '[B]ackward' here means 'antecedent' or reaching back into the past, but there is also an echo of its secondary meaning of 'primitive', which ties it to 'wild'. In Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, Antigonus is adamant that his three daughters will not 'bring false generations' (i.e. bear illegitimate children), as Hermione is suspected of doing.[12] Milly Theale, like Shakespeare's Hermione, is all but killed by heartbreak at the treachery of people she had previously trusted, although unlike Hermione she is not bodily resurrected. Yet her legitimacy as heiress both to her fortune and 'to all the ages' depends on her family history, with its potential questions of moral legitimacy, going unmentioned. As with Chad Newsome in *The Ambassadors* (1903), the precise source of Milly's wealth is not alluded to, so that Milly's being 'the final flower' of her family's (and, to certain characters, her country's) historical development, distracts attention from the intricacies of 'the unregulated cluster' of her family history and 'the closer growths of the stem' of whom the narrator skilfully and tactfully 'say[s] nothing'. These people, Milly's 'wild cosmopolite' ancestors, are both 'preserved' 'in the marble of French chisels' and 'exposed' to posterity's scrutiny of their moral legitimacy. Milly's fate is to take

[12] William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale,* II.ii.150, in *The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1131.

on her shoulders her family's history as well as its money; she herself is exposed to danger both physical and moral, but is ultimately preserved in her posthumous moral dignity.

Henry James's paternal grandfather, William James, who according to '[f]amily legend' landed in America from Ireland in the French Revolutionary year of 1789 with 'a desire to visit the fresh battlefields of the [American] Revolutionary war',[13] was himself just such a 'wild cosmopolite', entrepreneurial rather than bohemian. His business success in upstate New York 'accounted for' his grandson's relative wealth two generations down the line, just as Milly's forebears must in some way, unknown to the reader and perhaps unfamiliar to Milly herself, have 'accounted for' hers. This omission reflects the inevitably limited position from which any individual views another, and it is part of a wider preoccupation in the novel with attempts to see through, or beyond, what is apparently impenetrable or unmentionable. James's language, in enumerating Milly's forebears, shows life and death to be two sides of the same coin: 'handsome dead', 'beautiful vanished'. The absent commas mean that the adjectives become congruous in their incongruity; they allow no room for the reader to breathe in a way that is analogous to the suffocation Milly feels in a literal and figurative sense on account of her incipient illness and the burden of her money. But Milly also proves that she, too, can be someone like a 'beautiful vanished aunt' to posterity. Her beauty will survive her body in the minds of those who survive her, notably Densher; her vitality and desire for freedom will, in the same way, survive her short lifetime.

To be 'heiress to all the ages' is to be, in one sense, heiress to none, just as to be a citizen of the world, a cosmopolite, is to be, in one sense, a citizen of nowhere. Milly treads a fine line between living her life in the glare of others and being retrospectively glamourized. The narrator admits to this collapsing or condensing of past and present with respect to Milly's aura: 'When Milly smiled it was a public event—when she didn't it was a chapter of history.'[14] Milly is heiress to history as a textual production, and the novel, meta-textually, is that 'chapter of history' written up by a narrator whose method validates another of Mrs Stringham's impressions of Milly *in situ*: 'This was poetry—it was also history—Mrs Stringham thought, to a finer tune even than Maeterlinck and Pater, than Marbot and Gregorovius.'[15] James as narrator merges poetry and history in a way that is appropriate to the notion of Milly as someone who exists on the borders between private and public, past

[13] Leon Edel, *Henry James: The Untried Years 1843-1870* (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1953), 20.
[14] James, *Wings*, 131.
[15] James, *Wings*, 126.

and present, joy and despair, mind and matter, and life and death. The narrator is describing the narrative as well as Milly, and this lends authorial support to Mrs Stringham, who shows herself receptive to the interest of Milly as a person not limited to her wealth. Terry Eagleton's idea that James saw 'writing fiction' as 'among other things […] a kind of living death'[16] is suggestive of Milly's predicament, trapped by history and so able to live most freely when physically dead and textually posthumous.[17]

It is an irony of the first half of the novel that Mrs Stringham's sense of her own worldliness and knowledge of Milly should be undermined by the pair's experiences in London. If the real interest of Milly, for Mrs Stringham, is the potential effects of her wealth and the 'possibilities' it engenders, the fact that one of these possibilities should transpire to be someone Milly has already met – a ghost from her past – comes as a surprise to her. But Densher's reappearance in Milly's life, at Mrs Lowder's party in Lancaster Gate, is not so strange to Milly, who finds that 'it *was* odd that their one Englishman should fit; it wasn't, however, miraculous—they surely all had often seen how extraordinarily "small", as everyone said, was the world.'[18] Milly's openness to the possibility that she will meet people unexpectedly in unexpected places is both an aspect of her naivety and an aspect of her worldliness; she anticipates coincidence and recurrence, but not the duplicity and predatoriness that will accompany the reappearance of Densher. The 'world' may seem 'small', but 'everyone' is an affected exaggeration, meant to cover a few people of their acquaintance. Their social world, a cross-section of the rich and the sophisticated, the English middle and upper classes, and wealthy Europeans and expatriate Americans, is small indeed, but it is not small fry, since its power affects the whole social fabric; it even affects such figures as the Irish governess at Mrs Condrip's house and the Venetian gondolier at Milly's palazzo.

Cosmopolitanism in *The Wings of the Dove* is therefore predicated on a conspiracy among friends and acquaintances, and among false friends and acquaintances, that the world is 'extraordinarily "small"' even as its horizons seem visibly to expand. Its ethical dimension only works, however, if 'the world' is taken to mean the circle of one's own experience. As such James's narrative puts a high premium on audible talk as evidence of an external reality and a coherent community. It suspects that the fixed stare of a Bronzino portrait is

[16] Eagleton, *The English Novel*, 215.
[17] Eagleton's reading of James is informed by a Marxist understanding of 'culture' as one means of repressing class conflict. See *The English Novel*, 217-219.
[18] James, *Wings*, 173.

insufficient as evidence of historical and moral continuity and unity: Bronzino's lady, Milly finds, is 'unaccompanied by a joy' and 'dead, dead, dead'.[19] Of the impression the Bronzino makes on Milly, it has been noted that 'the monosyllabic tricolon indicat[es] that death need make only the most minimal effort to counteract human efforts to impress or perpetuate'.[20] It also indicates the literal muteness of such efforts. Likewise, the narrative suspects the 'brooding' Irish governess and the 'noiseless' gondolier,[21] whose muteness, and consequent inscrutability in linguistic terms, is evidence, for James, of the world's vast strange disunity rather than its smallness and cohesiveness.

The world's expansiveness is an aspect of modernity that James emphasizes in his non-fiction. The modern world according to Milly may be 'extraordinarily "small"', but for James it is perhaps truer to say that the 'wild cosmopolite backward generations' of the nineteenth century had rendered the world larger. At the beginning of *William Wetmore Story and His Friends* (1903), James reflects 'that there are occasions on which it comes home to us that, so far as we are contentedly cosmopolite to-day and move about in a world that has been made for us both larger and more amusing, we owe much of our extension and diversion to those comparatively few who, amid difficulties and dangers, set the example and made out the road.'[22] Contentment is an aspect of cosmopolitanism that James perceives in the new century, but his observation must be taken with a pinch of salt; if previous generations faced greater 'difficulties and dangers', the new danger is an excess of 'diversion', or travel and pleasure for their own sake. The world is 'larger and more amusing', but that new amusement must rest on an acknowledgement of the pioneers who 'made out the road'. 'Europe', James explains, 'has, in a word, been *made* easy' (James's emphasis).[23] James's reverence for the early American visitors to Europe is not simply gratitude, however; it is an honest acknowledgement that there are fewer experiences, now, which can be called new. In Venice, James writes in *Italian Hours* (1909), there is 'notoriously nothing more to be said on the subject.'[24] But this in itself can be a source of pleasure: 'It would a sad day indeed when there should be something new to say [about Venice]'.[25]

ii. 'The polyglot herd': Venice as a cosmopolitan experience

[19] James, *Wings*, 196.
[20] John Scholar, *Henry James and the Art of Impressions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 207.
[21] James, *Wings*, 78, 358.
[22] Henry James, *William Wetmore Story and His Friends: From Letters, Diaries and Recollections*, 2 volumes (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1903), i.3.
[23] James, *William Wetmore Story*, i.4.
[24] James, *Collected Travel Writings: The Continent*, 287.
[25] James, *Collected Travel Writings: The Continent*, 287.

The cosmopolite hotel where Densher initially lodges in Venice is a source of discomfort to him. Its ease of use on a practical level is diminished by a sense of its inhabitants' unfriendliness and incompatibility, and the language James uses to describe Densher's bewilderment is almost synaesthetic:

> The establishment, choked at that season with the polyglot herd, cockneys of all climes, mainly German, mainly American, mainly English, it appeared as the correspondingly sensitive nerve was touched, sounded loud and now sweet, sounded anything and everything but Italian, but Venetian. […] It made 'abroad,' both for his pleasure and his pain that he had to feel at almost any point how he had been through everything before. He had been three or four times, in Venice, during other visits, through this pleasant irritation of paddling away […][26]

The fact that Densher has 'been through everything before' is the source of his pain; the fact that this is a repeat experience renders it more, not less, painful to him. Experiences repeated are not always more bearable, and the world seems anything but 'large' to Densher as he suffocates in the 'polyglot' hotel. His 'pleasure' mingles with 'pain', and there is a corresponding sense in which the world may expand and contract according to the spectator's degree of amusement and discomfort. A larger world is diverting and amusing, but a smaller world is pressurized and disconcerting, even death-dealing. If Caliban's isle, in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, is 'full of noises, / Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not',[27] Densher's hotel, which 'sounded loud and now sweet', is a half-pleasant, half-unpleasant distraction from both the splendour of Venice and the splendour of Milly. What Densher desires above all, like Milly, is a kind of spiritual independence produced partly by physical isolation, and that must be found in both 'a sense of pomp and circumstance' (proud, public Venice) and 'a growth of initiation into the homelier Venetian mysteries' (private, modest Venice).[28] Whereas it has long been a cliché to say of Venice that '[t]he tourist Venice *is* Venice',[29] Densher's division of the city into the public and the private shows that his Venice, and James's, is a kind of metonym for the world, whose largeness and smallness are as much matters of perspective, perception and temperament as measurable physical reality. To be at home in the world is to be unafraid of the 'homely' as well as unperturbed by the grand and spectacular.

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[26] James, *Wings*, 359.
[27] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, III.ii.138-9, in *The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1235.
[28] James, *Wings*, 359.
[29] McCarthy, *The Stones of Florence and Venice Observed*, 177.

The Piazza San Marco is described in terms of 'the moral air […] that hung about our young friends' (Kate and Densher).[30] The square, for all its public persona, is a place of privacy where the secretive can hide in plain sight but out of earshot:

> It seemed in fact fairly to deepen for them as they stayed their course again; the splendid Square, which had so notoriously, in all the years, witnessed more of the joy of life than any equal area in Europe, furnished them, in their remoteness from earshot, with solitude and secrecy.[31]

'[T]he joy of life' is an allusion to Henrik Ibsen that recurs in James's fiction from the mid-1890s onwards. In Chapter 5, I return to the significance of Ibsenian *joie de vivre*, and James's interpretation of it. James's use of the expression in *The Wings of the Dove*, however, is ambiguous, since 'the joy of life' is something not happily or neutrally overseen by the personified Piazza, but 'notoriously […] witnessed'. Although the Piazza is witness to human life in all weathers – it is difficult when reading this passage not to think of Venetian view-painters such as Canaletto and Guardi, whose canvases of the Piazza testify to Venice's 'joy of life' in the eighteenth century – it cannot (to extend James's metaphor) *overhear* Kate and Densher's plotting.

Like the other characters in the novel, Venice, centring on Saint Mark's, sees but does not hear, and is itself seen but not (except for the babble of tourists) heard. Indeed, Venice privileges the visual; Jan Morris's impressionistic account of Venice concludes that history has judged that 'the appeal of the Serenissima [Venice] is astonishingly empirical',[32] by which she means primarily visual. Yet in *The Wings of the Dove*, the visual on its own, as an episteme, is suspect to most of the characters. What signifies the intrusion of the external world to Kate and Densher is not 'the splendid Square', or even 'the bright historic air', but 'the only sign for their ears, the flutter of the doves' which 'begot in the heart of each a fear.'[33] To other people, Kate and Densher in the midst of their duplicity 'suggested nothing worse – always by Kate's system – than a pair of the children of a supercivilised age making the best of an awkwardness.'[34] This perceived childishness is, of course, an illusion. The conqueror Napoleon's 'trouble with Venice', Mary McCarthy supposes, was 'the increment of childish history, of twice-told tales.'[35] Venice is a place suited, because of its history, to childish fantasy. Kate and Densher's very adult scheming, then, is out of kilter with the aura

[30] James, *Wings*, 373.
[31] James, *Wings*, 373.
[32] Jan Morris, *Venice*, 3rd revised edition (London: Faber & Faber, 1993), 299.
[33] James, *Wings*, 373.
[34] James, *Wings*, 379.
[35] McCarthy, *The Stones of Florence and Venice Observed*, 176.

of Venice, in which the city embalms its joyful past but also mocks, at every turn, its own lugubriousness (which for James was its prevailing contemporary mood).

This uniquely Venetian atmosphere, an overlapping melancholy and gaiety, is transposed onto Milly and Lord Mark:

> 'I think I should like,' said poor Milly after an instant, 'to die here.'
>
> Which made him, precisely, laugh.[36]

This attitude is the opposite of Kate and Densher's single-minded solemnity and amoral pragmatism. Napoleon famously called the Piazza San Marco the drawing-room of Europe, and Densher's impression of the square that 'it was more than ever the drawing-room of Europe, profaned and bewildered by some reverse of fortune', is symptomatic of James's doubts about the propitiousness of Venice as a chosen centre of cultural exchange.[37] John Ruskin may have thought the Doge's Palace, the old seat of the Venetian Republican government, 'the central building of the world', uniting East and West, but for James the centre of Venice is central only insofar as it is a *historic* centre, a kind of surviving witness to more illustrious past events and scenes.[38]

Venice for James and for Milly is, in spite of its being a kind of touristic Babel in which languages clamour meaninglessly for attention, a place of solitude and melancholy. The city mourns itself and the inhabitants mourn either themselves or the city, but there is a latent joy as well. As James reflects in *Italian Hours*, Venice 'is always interesting and almost always sad; but she has a thousand occasional graces and is always liable to happy accidents.'[39] This is the canvas of Venice in *The Wings of the Dove*, and it is related to cosmopolitanism. Milly is prejudiced against her Venetian physician, Eugenio, and her prejudice against him consists of an unthinking anti-cosmopolitan attitude that is something of a projection of her own cosmopolitan lifestyle enabled by money. Money, Milly has the sense to see, is singularly powerful as a determiner of human behaviour in the modern world: 'She had judged him [Eugenio] in advance—polyglot and universal, very dear and very deep—as probably but a swindler finished to the fingertips; for he was forever carrying one well-kept Italian hand to

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[36] James, *Wings*, 347.
[37] James, *Wings*, 416.
[38] John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice. Volume the First: The Foundations* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1851), 17.
[39] James, *Collected Travel Writings: The Continent*, 291.

his heart and plunging the other straight into her pocket, which, as she had instantly observed him to recognise, fitted it like a glove.'[40]

Milly's suspicion that Eugenio is almost literally money-grabbing is tied, uneasily, to his perceived cosmopolitanism; she is not fully conscious of her own cosmopolitanism, projecting it instead onto others. Milly's prejudice, automatic though it is, is still compatible with a cosmopolitan ethic. As Pablo Lemos Horta points out, taking the often cited example of the Victorian traveller, Richard Burton, 'one should not so quickly abandon the idea that these prejudices [of Burton's, against black Central Africans] were a product of Burton's successive cultural immersions [in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa] […] The adoption of local biases was essential to Burton's attempt to fashion new identities that would allow him to insinuate himself in a new ethnic, national, or religious community.'[41] In other words, there is an 'interplay between going native and internalizing native prejudices'[42] that contributes to an experientially-grounded cosmopolitanism, and Milly, in immersing herself in Venice, insinuates herself in local prejudices (shared by the Venetians and the expatriate residents) against the 'swindler'. It is difficult not to think of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, where Antonio, about to do business with Shylock, sarcastically addresses him: 'Hie thee, gentle Jew. / The Hebrew [Shylock] will turn Christian; he grows kind.'[43]

But the palazzo where Milly's impression occurs, she finds, 'held its history still in its great lap',[44] and this equally tactile metaphor shows that to touch and hold can be to guard and protect as well as to steal and swindle. Touch is morally ambiguous, and for the 'cosmopolite', history must be sensed physically if it is to be morally and spiritually redeeming. It is a difficult but necessary process, for the would-be cosmopolite, to extrapolate history from what is immediately present. Just as the young James in *A Small Boy* finds a Boulogne view 'blank almost […] with all Matthew Arnold's "ennui of the middle ages,"' so Densher in *The Wings of the Dove* – to take another example – finds that Milly's gondolier, Pasquale, 'would have been blank, […] if the term could ever apply to members of a race in whom vacancy was but a nest of darknesses—not a vain surface, but a place of withdrawal in which something obscure, something always ominous, indistinguishably lived.'[45] Pasquale

[40] James, *Wings*, 335.
[41] Pablo Lemos Horta, 'Cosmopolitan Prejudice', in Robbins and Horta, *Cosmopolitanisms*, 153-168 (159).
[42] Horta, 'Cosmopolitan Prejudice', 159.
[43] William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, I.iii.176-7, in *The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 469-470.
[44] James, *Wings*, 337.
[45] James, *Wings*, 413.

tactfully avoids giving Densher news of Milly's and Mrs Stringham's health, but Densher interprets this as a sinister act of concealment. The description of the Venetian 'vacancy' as 'not a vain surface, but a place of withdrawal' could well apply to James's prose in the novel, but this point itself masks the 'something obscure' in Densher's designation of the gondolier as, in effect, almost blank, like the Boulogne street in *What Maisie Knew*. As noted earlier, Pasquale is 'noiseless' (as servants of the period were trained to be), something that disconcerts and irritates Milly. Densher, here, is disconcerted and irritated by Pasquale's facial expression, which is also defined by its lack of something, although that something is 'always obscure'. It is through Pasquale's race that Densher attempts to find an explanation for what seems to be blankness but is not quite. Densher, like Milly with Eugenio, projects his own insecurities onto Pasquale, whose inscrutability is a quality Densher feels he needs himself in order to carry out his and Kate's plan.

Absence, or 'blankness', is never quite reified in James, although it is glamourized here as 'a nest of darknesses', reminiscent of the Conradian heart of darkness but multiplied to sinister effect. James implies that Densher misreads Pasquale by losing a sense of the past, specifically an ancestral past, that might offer a more fruitful explanation. Pasquale is the embodiment, or re-embodiment, of the other 'members of a race' in whom his body and face take literal shape. He should not be judged according to his fellow living Venetians, but according to the currents and customs of Venetian history, itself often 'obscure' but nevertheless edifying. The 'wild cosmopolite backward generations' of Milly's past are seen differently, for the reader, in the light of the implied homogeneity of Pasquale's fellow indigenous Venetians, whose 'vacancy' is construed by Densher as sinister rather than innocent. Densher misreads Pasquale through a lack of imagination, and for someone to provoke another's imagination in the novel depends largely on their material credentials. In other words, Milly is rich enough to make Mrs Stringham think romantically of her (Milly's) ancestors, whereas Pasquale is poor enough to make Densher think nothing of his (Pasquale's). Once again, poverty encroaches in the Jamesian text but does not rise to the surface. Santiago's redemptive 'language of affection' is not a language with which Densher is acquainted, and a truly cosmopolitan (affectionate, extra-linguistic) communication across cultures and classes is prevented by Densher's lack of the historic imagination that might otherwise justify his geographical reach and make him see the blankness at the heart of his own duplicity. This blankness connects *The Wings of the Dove* to *The Sense of the Past*, a

novel in which the felt quality of the past cannot be made to resolve the affairs of the heart, even if it can go some way towards alleviating the cosmopolitan dilemma.

iii. 'An Essay in Aid of the Reading of History': history with a cosmopolitan purpose in *The Sense of the Past*

In the century since its posthumous publication, *The Sense of the Past* has been considered chiefly in terms of James's interest in the counterfactual, in alternate histories and realities, and in the dramatic possibilities for James of the prototypically Wellsian science-fiction time-travel scenario. After the outbreak of the Great War, Roslyn Jolly argues, James 'produced writings […] [such as *The Sense of the Past*] which explored the uses and limits of an oppositional imagination in the face of the seemingly irresistible force of history'.[46] But *The Sense of the Past* can be seen more profoundly as a novel about breakdowns of communication, up to and including what Santiago calls 'the language of affection' (just one candidate for the lifeblood of cosmopolitanism). But the tale was begun in 1900, not in 1914. It was as much inspired – and, as it turned out, impaired – by the great fact of the turn of the new century as it was inspired by the end of the epoch James identified with the half-century beginning in 1864.

Despite the convenience of the 1864-1914 time-frame (fifty years since James's first published story in the penultimate year of the other great war to touch him, the American Civil War), 1900 was for James as for millions of others a natural moment at which to reflect on the past in a qualitative as well as a quantitative sense. According to James's literary executor, Percy Lubbock, '[t]he original version of *The Sense of the Past* [i.e. the version begun and put aside in 1900] broke off in the middle of the scene between Ralph Pendrel and the Ambassador (Book III).'[47] Given this and given James's different sense of historical disruption occasioned by the outbreak of war in 1914, the novel is more faithfully identifiable with the turn-of-the century world than with wartime. I focus not on the time travel chapter, which though the last of four chapters constitutes just over half the work as it stands in finished form, but on the first three chapters in which Ralph's experiences, however impressionistic, fall within the bounds of verisimilitude and 'the air of reality (solidity of specification)' famously required by James in his 1884 essay.[48]

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[46] Jolly, *Henry James*, 206.
[47] Henry James, *The Sense of the Past*, edited by Percy Lubbock (London: Collins, 1917), 285.
[48] James, *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*, 53.

Ralph Pendrel, a young New Yorker living on the cusp of the twentieth century, is engaged to be married to Aurora Coyne, and has written an essay on history. He is contacted by an unknown English relative, Philip Augustus Pendrel, a bachelor who is so impressed by the essay that he bequeaths Ralph his fine early-eighteenth-century London house. Aurora pledges to marry him if he is true to his vocation as a historian. Ralph, on his first visit to Europe, visits the house and is impressed by the house's antiquity but is reluctant to assume permanent residence. He finds a portrait of an ancestral namesake from the early nineteenth century who resembles him exactly. The portrait comes to life so that ancestor and descendant meet. Subsequently, re-entering the house, Ralph is transported to the early nineteenth century, *circa* 1820, where he takes his ancestor's place and meets his relatives, discovering that he is engaged to his cousin, Molly Midmore. But Ralph is attracted to Molly's sister, Nan, who is engaged to the boorish Sir Cantopher Bland. The novel breaks off as Ralph tells Nan of his intention to marry Molly and 'make her happy'.[49]

The novel is not, Jolly rightly points out, quite as thematically radical as it might first appear, because 'James had always represented the false nature of civilization and the latent and potential horrors of social life'.[50] She claims that 'from the perspective of 1820 Ralph sees the absolute superiority of his own age', and that, in summary, for James, 'the novel re-establishes the meliorist myth that the war had smashed'.[51] If the last statement is overstating the novel's purposiveness – Ralph's 'present' is 1900, not 1914, and James's novel originated in the *fin-de-siècle* peacetime that connects it to *The Awkward Age* (1899) – nevertheless, the novel consolidates James's understanding of his own lifetime, its constituent phases and its fragility when envisaged as a continuous whole. Oliver Herford adds the useful caveat that '[t]he story as we have it is not so much about time travel as it is about *making things up* and *making things happen*—and those are fictional rather than historical processes, activities of the Jamesian "dramatist".'[52] James, this novel would suggest, is more interested in the inevitably fictional, dramatic dimension of the discipline of history, than in any idea of the past as a series of recoverable facts or indubitable truths. He finds that the past is something to be played or toyed with; it is more fruitful to conceive of it as a means than an end.

But to what end? The title is everything: as a means of making sense of that past and therefore of the cultural present. This is where history and cosmopolitanism, in James,

[49] James, *Sense*, 281.
[50] Jolly, *Henry James*, 214.
[51] Jolly, *Henry James*, 218.
[52] Herford, *Henry James's Style of Retrospect*, 64-65.

intersect. Haviland's thesis about James's 'play of differences' as a means of reconciling the past with the present, which she applies chiefly to his 'travel' writings, chimes neatly with James's 'time-travel' experiment in *The Sense of the Past*, and with his cosmopolitan ethic as expressed at the mid-point of his own career. In an obituary-tribute to Wolcott Balestier published in 1892, James praises Balestier's possession of 'the real cosmopolitan spirit, the easy imagination of hindrances and differences surmounted.'[53] '[R]eal', here, distinguishes Balestier's authentic cosmopolitanism from the new, *faux*-cosmopolitanism of the 1890s; but 'spirit' and 'easy imagination' are more difficult words. They suggest something personal and also something universal, something limited by point of view alongside something transcendent. If 'the easy imagination of hindrances and differences surmounted' is part of 'the real cosmopolitan spirit', this is a sign that cosmopolitanism and history, as experiences to be confronted and worked through, necessitate the same method, namely the simultaneous recognition of, playing with, and surmounting of, difference. James's 'real cosmopolitan spirit' personalizes, and makes ripe for fictional treatment, the Hegelian 'world Spirit'.

Reading is one way of channelling this cosmopolitan spirit. For this reason, James himself would have been an enthusiastic reader of Ralph's 'An Essay in Aid of the Reading of History',[54] and *The Sense of the Past* can be read as constituting James's own 'Essay' in aid of the same task. The comparison with Kant's 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose' cannot be overlooked or dismissed on the grounds that the content of Ralph's essay is largely unelaborated in the novel. Ralph's conspicuous social awkwardness and lack of self-awareness brings to mind Kant's idea that 'it might be possible to have a history with a definite natural plan for creatures who have no plan of their own'. Aurora's comment that Ralph's 'little book' is 'so wonderful for a man uninitiated; by which I venture to mean, you see, a man untravelled', demonstrates James's belief that travel, empirical exploration of the palpable past, is necessary to justify one's idea of history.[55] Ralph will later find out that a sense of the past is correspondingly necessary to justify travel: time travel is therefore, in James's scheme, a final, albeit supernatural, step in logical progression for Ralph once he has travelled across the Atlantic from America to England. This process is a struggle, and when Aurora quotes Ralph's essay – 'what you call the "backward vision"'[56] – she points

[53] James, *Autobiographies*, 669.
[54] James, *Sense*, 41.
[55] James, *Sense*, 33-4.
[56] James, *Sense*, 34.

towards the problem of backing up ideas with sense experience, which can be represented in words but not exactly reproduced in them.

In *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), Isabel Archer, reading at home in Albany, New York, appears to struggle with, and finally gives up on, 'a history of German Thought'[57] (in which she is sure to read about Kant, Hegel, and Goethe), thereby choosing a pragmatic rather than a metaphysical basis for her subsequent choices. Similarly, Ralph is someone whose life, like James's, is a struggle with history as much as it is a struggle with people. But he does not give up; like Isabel, his failure is only ostensible. He confronts his material and makes a choice to confront posterity. His 'Essay', like Kant's 'Idea', is written in the hope that others will use it as a conceptual framework; it is not final or even partial, but a tentative and provisional idea. The narrator, indirectly quoting the English Mr Pendrel, describes the title of Ralph's book as 'unpretending', and the book as 'a spare volume'; but in old Mr Pendrel's opinion 'every word reached the mark' and the book is 'a contribution to causes he [Mr Pendrel] had always had much at heart'.[58] When Mr Pendrel bequeaths Ralph his house, the implication is that the English Mr Pendrel, too, has passed into history; his letter is now a 'delightful document'.[59]

All this suggests that Ralph as we meet him is a Hegelian who wants to unite a total view of history with an attention to detail that nevertheless bears abstract ideas in mind. Hegel refers without anxiety about possible contradiction to 'the infinite difference between a principle in the abstract, and its realization in the concrete.'[60] 'Although Freedom is, primarily, an undeveloped idea,' he writes, 'the means it uses are external and phenomenal; presenting themselves in History to our sensuous vision. The first glance at History convinces us that the actions of men proceed from their needs, their passions, their characters and talents'.[61] Aurora quotes Ralph as saying that he is motivated in life by 'the historic passion',[62] a notion that echoes Hegel's idea of history as the history of both human reason and human passion. Ralph's struggle is to unite these aspects of his nature:

[57] James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 41.
[58] James, *Sense*, 41.
[59] James, *Sense*, 41.
[60] Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 19.
[61] Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 20.
[62] James, *Sense*, 33.

> The material advantage might be uncertain; but it was blessedly not for the economic question, it was for the historic, the aesthetic, fairly in fact for the cryptic, that he cared. […] His "other" passion in short had soon begun freshly to glow.[63]

The narrator's list here omits 'the political', and if Hegel, according to R. G. Collingwood, 'repudiated by implication the Kantian doctrines that all history is political and that history is a spectacle',[64] Ralph seeks what Collingwood calls 'a history of man in his concrete actuality'.[65]

Ralph's lack of overt interest in politics is at first unnerving. Yet however politically charged the novel may appear when read through the lens of the Great War, what is more revealing of the line of James's thinking in *The Sense of the Past* is its reaffirmation (again through subtle reconfiguration) of the dilemma of the would-be cosmopolite. As before, this is the person forced to confront the apparent gap between universal and particular, necessary and contingent, and *cosmos* and *polis*; only this time, the hero is confronted by a chance supernatural accident and transported to the time of his ancestors. The outbreak of the War and James's sense of it as an epochal, apocalyptic turning point did not fracture his sense of the connectedness of history and cosmopolitanism. James continued to see the past as something whose otherness requires the kind of free and disinterested impartial interaction that cosmopolitanism ideally subsists in but cannot guarantee in practice. This ideal of cosmopolitanism's disinterestedness must be distinguished from Matthew Arnold's ideal of disinterestedness for literary criticism:

> It is of the last importance that English criticism should clearly discern what rule for its course, […] it ought to take. The rule may be summed up in one word—*disinterestedness*. And how is criticism to show disinterestedness? By keeping aloof from what is called 'the practical view of things;' by resolutely following its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches.[66]

Jamesian cosmopolitanism upholds disinterestedness as an ideal but admits its precariousness in practice; 'a free play of the mind' can never overcome the moral implications of human interaction (including interaction with literary texts and historical relics). Insofar as James upholds disinterestedness in life, it is in a Hazlittian rather than an Arnoldian spirit: the

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[63] James, *Sense*, 42.
[64] Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, 121.
[65] Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, 122.
[66] Matthew Arnold, *Selected Prose*, edited with an introduction by P. J. Keating (London: Penguin, 1987), 142.

'disinterested' mind, for Hazlitt, is 'naturally interested in the welfare of others'.[67] As David Bromwich observes, 'for Hazlitt's meaning of disinterestedness, the alternative [to 'going out of oneself'] was to imagine other selves; for Arnold's it is to enter the condition of selflessness.'[68] James's imagining of other selves wins out in *The Sense of the Past*, and for Ralph as for James, Hazlitt's is the better kind of disinterestedness, because it is closer to the role of the historian.

For this reason, experience must not lag behind interpretation. If it does, as it does for Ralph embarking upon his journey into the visitable past, the 'man of the world' is put in a position of having always to apologise for himself and be apologised for:

> If he [Ralph] had had an underhand dream that his house might prove itself "haunted"—the result of an inordinate conception, in his previous time, of old and doubtless foolish tales—the thing might after all have been forgiven to his so belated freedom. Experience had lagged with him behind interpretation, and the worst that could be said was that his gift for the latter might do well to pause awhile till an increase of the former could catch up. By the time it did catch up he might perhaps have come to make out for himself that, as is perfectly known to the *blasés* millions, despair seldom fails to settle on any surmise that the common forces of solicitation in respectable neighbourhoods may be in a given case much transcended. He was sufficiently a man of the world, further, not to care to face the smile that would greet his having had that lesson to learn.[69]

To connect with his neighbours on a level that transcends the conventional, in other words, is a futile exercise, as experience teaches the man of the world. James does not say that Ralph *has* learned this lesson, but that he *would* be greeted with an ironic smile on 'having had to learn' it: once more the hesitancy of the past imperfect gives a sense of Ralph's and James's provisionality, and a grammatical experiment becomes a measure, in prose, of a dramatic experiment in rescuing history – the sense of the past – from the excesses of modern geographical range and moral vacuity. If Ralph is 'sufficiently a man of the world […] not to care', this is no disguise of the fact that he is someone for whom practice falls behind theory, and in whom time travel becomes a necessary adjunct to the theorizing of his historiographical 'Essay'.

The significance of 'local history', which was consolidated as an intellectual discipline in the Victorian era (the Victoria History of the Counties of England was begun in 1899, the year

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[67] William Hazlitt, *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action; Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, edited by Duncan Wu, with an introduction by Tom Paulin (The Selected Works of William Hazlitt, I) (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998), 3.
[68] David Bromwich, *Hazlitt: The Mind of a Critic* (1983; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 88.
[69] James, *Sense*, 52-53.

prior to James's first draft), was certainly present to James. In *The Sense of the Past*, we learn that 'the man calling about the Census or the Directory' plays, in the back-story, an important part in solidifying Ralph's identity as both New Yorker and writer.[70] We are early on informed of 'the rumoured grave illness and imminent extinction, at a great age, of the last person in that country [England] bearing Ralph's family name [Pendrel], a person of a distant cousinship with whom he [Ralph] had been indifferently aware.'[71] The most recent census at the time of James's initial composition of the novel, the 1891 *Census Returns of England and Wales*, has only a single record of the surname Pendrel, one Richard Pendrel of Surrey, born in 1820, the time in which Ralph finds himself.[72] This is the kind of coincidental detail, bridging the present and the past, fact and fiction, that would have greatly interested James regardless of his actual research or imaginative methods; the facts or anecdotes that stimulate the imagination cannot be dislocated, in James, from the imaginative process.

This coincidence seems symbolic of the novel's contingency, its dependence upon a happy accident. Percy Lubbock claimed that *The Sense of the Past* was 'abandoned [in 1900] for accidental reasons, not because [James] himself was dissatisfied with it.'[73] The fact that Lubbock attributes 'accidental reasons' to James's breaking off is ironic: in 1900, James, like Ralph, was caught in a kind of accidental time warp, revisiting the past but also peering anxiously into the future. If to be a 'cosmopolite' can be something accidental but also something chosen, so the process of writing a novel can be either accidental or deliberate. In the January of the new century James wrote to his agent, 'I must tell you that I have broken down on the subject of "The Sense of the Past," […] I mean as to that particular idea.'[74] That it was apparently the eponymous idea that caused James's temporary abandonment of the work is telling, since it reveals the inconsistency in trying to write abstractly about something sensory and empirical; to write convincingly about 'the sense of the past', even with the supernatural element added, one must have had such a sense oneself, or the imagination will fail to recreate the quality of that sense. James's dilemma is essentially Ralph's: how to get in touch with 'the scrutable, palpable past'[75] – this echoes James's championing of 'a palpable

[70] James, *Sense*, 10.
[71] James, *Sense*, 2.
[72] "Pendrel". *Census Returns of England and Wales, 1891*. Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO), 1891. Pendrel - 1891 England Census - Ancestry.co.uk (accessed November 4, 2018).
[73] James, *Sense*, v.
[74] James, *Henry James: A Life in Letters*, 334.
[75] James, *Sense*, 41.

imaginable *visitable* past'[76] in the Prefaces – and put it into words (as historian or novelist) without unduly obscuring the quality of that sense. Quality, or texture, is the stumbling block. Ralph fantasizes about making the past, in the form of the old house, literally speak (prosopopoeia), as one solution to this problem: '"[…] I am the future," mused Ralph Pendrel, "and I dream of making it [the house] speak."'[77]

Interest in and insight into others' lives turns out to mean an unsolicited self-knowledge: Ralph's interest in the past means confrontation with himself, literally, as he finds that the face that he sees in the portrait in the London house 'confounded him as his own'.[78] This scene, which occurs prior to Ralph's transportation into the past, parallels Milly Theale's encounter with the Bronzino resembling herself in *The Wings of the Dove*. But whereas Milly finds the Bronzino portrait to be 'dead, dead, dead', portending her own death, Ralph finds on inspecting the Regency-era portrait that 'the young man revealed, responsible, conscious, quite shining out of the darkness, presented him the face he had prayed to reward his vigil'.[79] Ralph's imputed prayer, his historical 'vigil', suggests that his willpower has paid off: he has not only been blessed with good luck in his inheritance, but also blessed with the fruits of his curiosity. The past is alive rather than dead. For James, Ralph's spirit of historical inquiry must be equal to his fortune in having his geographical horizons expanded and his sense of Europe corroborated by hard experience in a particular locality. Ralph therefore unites luck and pluck, the two crucial ingredients of cosmopolitanism as James conceived it: to be a 'cosmopolite' is, in the first place, an accident of fortune, a product of a random lottery of birth, and, in the second, an endlessly prolonged roving commission, a cultural duty and willed identity.

In Ralph, James thus represents someone who seeks to write history with a cosmopolitan purpose. Ralph's musing to himself, '"I am the future […] and I dream of making [the house] speak"', is not only a private wish; it is also a desire that history should be conceived in such a way that the past becomes tangibly and universally intelligible, beyond the borders erected by language and nation. In reading his cousin's letter and in due course taking possession of Number Nine, Mansfield Square, Ralph not only accepts a private gift, but also unites 'the American kinship' with 'the English'.[80] He therefore ends the mutual 'turning of an

[76] James, *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*, 1177.
[77] James, *Sense*, 46.
[78] James, *Sense*, 86.
[79] James, *Sense*, 86.
[80] James, *Sense*, 40.

unconscious back' each to the other, 'the art of the cold shoulder', by taking note of 'the English view of what he had always heard called at home "the American attitude."'[81] Ralph is grammatically distanced from the perception of this attitude and from the attitude itself: he is no more to be defined by possessing qualities distinctively 'American' than he is to be defined as an Englishman by living in London and passing for his English ancestor when he travels back in time.

If Ralph is thus by default a citizen of the world, rather than a citizen of a particular nation, James's narrative method, with its proliferation of imperfect verb forms and referentially vague quotations, makes Ralph someone ideally suited to the strange circumstances that befall him. Just as verbs in *The Sense of the Past* are relentlessly passivized, so Ralph is presented as someone to whom odd things are bound to happen, but who is also driven to make the best of them when they do occur. When he first sees the London house, Ralph is embarrassed by the discrepancy between his narrow experiences thus far and the wealth of his inheritance. Ralph is secretive about the house's personal significance for himself as a historian:

> He couldn't go so far as to tell anyone that he had never seen anything so old—so old at once and so elaborate—as a structure dating only from the earlier years of the previous century. [This places Ralph's 'present' at the very end of the nineteenth century]. He couldn't decently cry it on the housetops that he had never yet so wetted his lips at the fount of romance.[82]

This secretiveness, as well as his possessiveness and the passivity of his character – things happen to him more than he makes things happen – make Ralph the ideal person to whom something strange and supernatural occurs, just as John Marcher in 'The Beast in the Jungle' (1903), James's tale of a life of studied anticipation of a great event, 'had been the man of his time, *the* man, to whom nothing on earth was to have happened.'[83] John Marcher waits passively for something to happen, only to discover that his passivity is itself the momentous thing about him he had always been dreading. Similarly, Ralph Pendrel conjectures that he needs time to work out 'what would have been his benefactor's idea' in running the house: 'The idea would come to him in some way of its own […] On its appearance he should know it, and he mustn't before that make a mistake.'[84] Ralph anticipates the importance of making himself a proper denizen of the house: if he is above Anglo-American rivalries, if he has a

[81] James, *Sense*, 40-41.
[82] James, *Sense*, 54.
[83] Henry James, *The Beast in the Jungle* [1903] (London: Martin Seckler, 1915), 85.
[84] James, *Sense*, 57.

sense of 'Europe', he is at the same time wary of what must take shape in his sense of himself.

Ralph senses the need to wait: but he wants his experiences to serve his historical research. His decision to wait and let the experience of occupying the house determine exactly how he ought to run it serves his other motives of winning Aurora Coyne and corroborating his historical theory:

> This was meanwhile in the interest of all the things for which in his queer position he wanted a free hand. His queer position was that, as he privately panted, everything had dropped on him at once. He saw the face of Aurora Coyne whenever he winced with one of those livelier throbs of the sense of "Europe" which had begun to consume him even before his ship sighted land. He had sniffed the elder world from afar very much as Columbus had caught on *his* immortal approach the spices of the Western Isles. His consciousness was deep and confused, but "Europe" was for the time and for convenience the sign easiest to know it by.[85]

Ralph's 'queer position' of 'everything [having] dropped on him at once' is, like Maisie's surreptitious initiation into a world of adult knowingness, and Millie's induction into society as a desirable heiress, only the prelude for further extraordinary and unforeseen events. What distinguishes Ralph's thoughts from Maisie's or Millie's, however, is the fact that Ralph, unlike the heroines, has vested interests, particular 'things' in which he desires 'a free hand', impressionistically signalled by James as 'the face of Aurora Coyne' and the as yet indistinct 'sense of Europe […] the elder world'. Ralph is the culmination of the Jamesian naïve or accidental cosmopolite character, with the added dimension of an academic historical interest, and not merely an active historic 'sense'.

It is this latter 'sense' of history that magnifies Ralph's academic historical interest. On first experiencing London, he is perturbed not only by the metropolis but by its relation to the world as a whole, in a way that foreshadows his concern with the wider implications of his time travel:

> He gasped on reminding himself as his tenth day dawned that the glimpse accompanied for him with so much ado was yet but a small millionth of the whole. The whole waited, for didn't there hang behind this troublous foreground the vast vagueness which the English themselves spoke of as "abroad"? And he was in all conscience already abroad enough![86]

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[85] James, *Sense*, 57-58.
[86] James, *Sense*, 59.

Living culturally halfway between the United States and the European Continent, in England, symbolized by its capital, Ralph presupposes the existence of the world entire, and places himself as 'already abroad' in England even as he simultaneously apprehends the 'abroad'-ness of Europe to the conventional English. Like Ralph waiting for the house's true character to dawn on him, 'the whole [of London] waited' for Ralph. Although Ralph is settled in London, his cosmopolitan experience is not a case of what Tanya Agathocleous calls 'visible city, invisible world',[87] in which the city is the world in microcosm. Rather, it is a case of a visible 'millionth of the whole' city, and an invisible world that is nevertheless inferred from the point of view of the city, which is, from Ralph's point of view, 'already abroad enough'. Ralph's cosmopolitanism is something that slowly dawns on him: 'the face of Aurora Coyne' is, appropriately enough, the face of the new dawn of Ralph's self-awareness.

Seen through the windows of the house he has inherited, the murky London 'air' for Ralph represents the clarity but also the obscurity of the past. If Aurora suggests the dawn, the London air 'was signally not the light of freshness and suggested as little as possible the element in which the first children of nature might have begun to take notice':

> Ages, generations, inventions, corruptions had produced it, and it seemed, wherever it rested, to have filtered through the bed of history. It made the objects about show for the time as in something "turned on"—something successful that might have been seen at the theatre. What was one to call it the confounding impression but that of some stamp, some deposit again laid bare, of a conscious past, recognising no less than recognised?[88]

To read history, for Ralph the historian, is simultaneously to be read by it: the past is as conscious of the present as the present of the past. The objects showing 'as in something "turned on"', like lighted theatrical props, also suggest the 'turns' of fortune that befall Ralph, and the melodramatic, theatrical quality of his experiences, which confound his sense of their historical remoteness. Just as Ralph's experience has hitherto lagged behind his interpretation, Ralph's immediate impressions of the house and its contents lag behind his knowledge of its age ('The house was of about 1710'[89]). The house's contents, described anthropomorphically as 'animating presences', 'were of an age so remote and yet of an imagery so near. None of the steps were missing and the backward journey took no turns.'[90] The house and its objects, both theatrically 'turned on' – doing theatrical 'turns' – and

[87] Agathocleous, *Urban Realism and the Cosmopolitan Imagination in the Nineteenth Century*, passim.
[88] James, *Sense*, 64.
[89] James, *Sense*, 65.
[90] James, *Sense*, 65.

lacking 'turns' in the mental 'backward journey' needed to apprehend their age, the palpable past for Ralph is disarmingly near as well as appreciably far. This proper sense of a near-far quality is the correct attitude, James implies, for the wayward cosmopolite grasping after metaphysical truth: neither too close, unable to see the wood for the trees, nor too detached, unable to see the trees for the wood.

This mirrors James's own predicament as a novelist attempting to represent the link between the cosmopolitan experience and the experience of the historian. As a novelist, James was not averse to the science-fictional idea of someone being transported into the past, but *The Sense of the Past* demonstrates his perennial fear of limiting his characters' freedom in tethering them to preconceived ideas or motifs. Richard Poirier claims that '[p]recisely because his mind was saturated with ideas, James feared lest he used characters merely as illustrations of them', finding in this 'the cultural dilemma of the early novels. It was James's in the act of writing, and it plagues his characters in their relationships with one another.'[91] Poirier argues that '[t]he comedy' of the early novels 'reveals how James met and tried to master this difficulty.'[92] If Ralph illustrates James's idea of the historian-*manqué* confronted with the past, James in this late novel incorporates his own fear of the difficulty of 'violating the dramatic freedom'[93] of his central character.

As such, Ralph is made to feel some of the hesitancy James evidently felt in so deliberately and directly dramatizing the idea of time-travel, first fantasized, and then actualized:

> This evening at any rate […] he arrived, between his fondness and his fear, at the easiest compromise with concentration. Unmistakeably, as the afternoon waned, he held off as much as hovered. It was a natural effect of his restlessness that he didn't for the present see himself settled. It was positively as if, the cup held so close to his lips, the taste of 1710 might prove too stiff a dose. He would judge, as it were, when he came back—back, as who should say so, from everywhere else. He would go of course everywhere else; intellectually now he could well afford to. This would make all the general initiation that, as a preliminary, was indispensable—the series of scattered dashes and superficial dips.[94]

Ralph cannot settle in the house as long as it limits his intellectual horizon: his 'restlessness', the typical condition of the unmoored cosmopolite, makes him averse to the fullest 'taste of 1710'. James represents Ralph's experiences as though they were his own: actually given the chance to immerse himself in the world of two centuries past, James could not give himself

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[91] Richard Poirier, *The Comic Sense of Henry James: A Study of the Early Novels* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960), 9.
[92] Poirier, *The Comic Sense of Henry James*, 9.
[93] Poirier, *The Comic Sense of Henry James*, 9.
[94] James, *Sense*, 68-69.

'too stiff a dose'. Lamb House in Rye, built not long after 1710, was, as James described it in *The Awkward Age*, 'one of those impressions of a particular period that it takes two centuries to produce.'[95] Given the sheer weight (two hundred years' worth) of this awareness, James needed, like Ralph, to 'go of course everywhere else': to accept the past in relation to the present rather than in isolation. Time travel is therefore the ideal means by which James can dramatize the cosmopolite character in touch with the past without losing a consciousness of the present. But as I now hope to show, James and Ralph are ultimately inhibited by a recognition that the felt quality of the past cannot be made to resolve the intangible affairs of the heart, even if it can go some way towards alleviating the cosmopolitan dilemma.

iv. 'Turns of fortune': cosmopolitanism, time travel, and the language of affection

To feel the quality of the past, to extrapolate concrete experience from something abstractly immaterial, is Ralph's burning ambition:

> If his idea in fine was to recover the lost moment, to feel the stopped pulse, it was to do so as experience, in order to be again consciously the creature that *had* been, to breathe as he had breathed and feel the pressure that he had felt.[96]

Ralph's idea involves entering a trans-historical as well as a cosmopolitan domain; he must negotiate not only with cultural but with historical difference, and it is only by experiencing what has previously been experienced in time and place by someone else that this can be achieved. What David Kurnick, with reference to *A Small Boy and Others*, calls 'the glamour of the plural'[97] – the lure of 'others' whose interest often merges with self-interest in James – could just as well be applied to *The Sense of the Past*, in which otherness is glamourized and others' subjectivities fetishized. Underneath this, however, lies the notion that such insight into other lives relies not only on what Aurora calls 'the turn of your [Ralph's] mind',[98] and on what Ralph calls 'the turn of the wheel of fortune',[99] as Ralph describes his inheritance, but also on what the narrator terms 'the turn of his spirit':

> He was by the turn of his spirit oddly indifferent to the actual and the possible; his interest was all in the spent and the displaced, in what had been determined and composed round-about him, what had

[95] Henry James, *The Awkward Age* (London: William Heinemann, 1899), 255.
[96] James, *Sense*, 47.
[97] David Kurnick, *Empty Houses: Theatrical Failure and the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 105.
[98] James, *Sense*, 23.
[99] James, *Sense*, 42.

> been presented as a subject and a picture, by ceasing—so far as things ever cease—to bustle or even to be.[100]

Ralph's interest is in recovering what has been lost or discarded: what shocks him is the recognition that 'the spent and the displaced' can also be 'the actual and the possible', and that other selves can face him as doubles of himself.

James's interest in the immediate, dramatic dimension of the discipline of history – his Hazlittian disinterestedness, his imagining of other selves – is borne out by the style of the opening sentence of *The Sense of the Past*. With typical deixis (verging on ironic paralipsis) and punctuated by qualifying clauses, James outlines the case of Ralph Pendrel as against his contemporaries:

> They occurred very much at the same hour and together, the two main things that—exclusive of the death of his mother, recent and deeply felt by him—had yet befallen Ralph Pendrel, who, at thirty, had known fewer turns of fortune than many men of his age.[101]

The narrative begins *in medias res*, not only because we are entering into the early 'middle years' (as James might say) of Ralph's life, but also because the narrative presumes a point of entry at which the momentous events ('[t]hey', 'the two main things'), which are the sentence's subject, must already be taken for granted as momentous. We are immediately turning into history in the sense of approaching it at an angle, an angle that gradually settles as our view becomes clearer. It becomes clearer when we are given the object of the sentence ('Ralph Pendrel'), followed by information as to the significance of the relationship between Ralph and 'the two main things', namely the background information that Ralph 'had known fewer turns of fortune than many men of his age'. '[A]ge' here suggests both numerical 'age' in years and the historical or generational 'age' against which Ralph's subsequent time-transporting experiences will shed new and otherwise obscured light. This ambiguity is part of James's point: where one's own age merges into the collective age defined by the coincidence of other people is the hinge on which the story itself turns.

The opening paragraph continues by fleshing out the detail of Ralph's 'turns of fortune' prior to 'the two main things', in a manner that suggests a past overburdening Ralph's present sense of self:

> But as these matters were quite distinct I take them for clearness in their order. He had up to this time perforce encountered life mainly in the form of loss and of sacrifice—inevitabilities these, however,

[100] James, *Sense*, 47.
[101] James, *Sense*, 1.

> such as scarce represented a chequered career. He had been left without his father in childhood; he had then seen two sisters die; he had in his twentieth year parted by the same law with his elder and only brother; and he had finally known the rupture of the strongest tie of all, an affection for which, as a living claim, he had had to give up much else.[102]

The first sentence here answers, in dialectic fashion, the sense of unclearness created in the novel's opening sentence. Yet the crescendo of 'had had to give up', following in the wake of the numerous other past perfect verbal constructions ('had […] encountered', 'had been left', 'had […] seen', 'had […] parted', 'had […] known'), reinforces the sense of a life of 'loss and sacrifice' that the narrator imputes to Ralph. Indeed, Ralph has most recently lost someone (his mother) for whom he had already sacrificed other claims on his time, and these losses have now left a void for other people, and other affectionate claims, to fill. What nourishes Ralph between his mother's death and 'two main things' is, presumably, his memories of the dead people. This void is filled, in one sense, by time travel; the possible emptiness of Ralph's future is recompensed by his involuntary dive into the past.

Although he is described as having 'known fewer turns of fortune than many men of his age', Ralph's fortunes have hitherto pointed in only one direction, downwards, as grief has piled on top of grief. The image of Fortune's wheel is an example of James's fondness for allegory, although the historical origins of the image did not seem to interest him. Intertextually overlaid with the 'turn of the screw' metaphor and heightened by the ambiguity of 'fortune' (suggesting material wealth as well as luck) and of 'many men of his age' (signifying Ralph's years on earth but also, correspondingly, his epoch in history), the clause is pregnant with meaning; it is knowingly self-referential as well as foreshadowing the central time travel episode. It is open to question whether 'these matters' (still unspecified) are indeed 'quite distinct'; the narrator is obliged to clarify the first sentence but succeeds only in furnishing a chronology of 'inevitabilities' that indefinitely defers the 'matters' supposedly in hand. Indeed, the inevitability of death is later thrown radically into question by the time travel scenario. The time travel scenario implies non-finality, an existential contingency that depends upon the past as a possible alternate reality, an ante-life rather than an afterlife as a supplement to life as we think we know it.

James considers, therefore, that it is the force of misunderstanding that is irresistible, and that this force in particular makes for what Jolly calls 'the seemingly irresistible force of history'. If these 'inevitabilities […] scarce represented a chequered career', we are left asking in what

[102] James, *Sense*, 1.

sense Ralph's life might be called a 'career' aside from his professional life. '[C]hequered' has connotations of straightforwardly black-and-white differences, or changes in fortune; but 'career' implies that life itself is a contrived self-fashioning over and above the life of leisure apparently enjoyed by so many of James's protagonists. Just as money cannot buy happiness, so leisure cannot buy exemption from personal tragedy. The adjective, 'chequered', might also remotely suggest a kind of dramatization, a retrospective analysis of one's life that endows it with a dialectic of good and bad, happiness and sorrow. One of Noah Webster's definitions of the verb 'checker' (Webster Americanizes the spelling) in his seminal *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828), a product of the era Ralph finds himself in, is '[t]o diversify, to variegate with different qualities, scenes, or events'.[103] Arguably, this definition accords with James's fictional methodology both in theory (the Prefaces) and in practice (the fictions).

To have a 'chequered career' (or not) is really the question of how far one goes towards adding to the 'inevitabilities', including bereavement, that everyone must face. Such additions are, in one sense, what Jamesian cosmopolitanism means: the sum total of *un*necessary, disposable but deliberately chosen experience above hand-to-mouth existence, whether or not this means travel, leisure, money, or social success. In *The Sense of the Past*, it is made apparent from the outset that Ralph, like Milly Theale, for all the 'inevitabilities' of his multiple bereavements, is determined to find something more than mere 'uncertainties and recalculations'. When Aurora Coyne proposes to Ralph 'that if you do rejoin me [in America] you engage me to stay' (as his fiancée),[104] this entails the kind of readjustment of other people (and of his own actions) of which Ralph's experience typically consists. But instead of 'turning an unconscious back'[105] on England, the past, and other people, Ralph now fully admits his '"other" passion', the historic, which happens to coincide with a cosmopolitan dilemma imposed on him by circumstances.

Aurora will marry Ralph if, in going to England and returning to New York, he is 'loyal' to 'the real truth' and to his 'genius'.[106] Cosmopolitanism is about negotiation, about moral and intellectual bargaining; above all, it is about the simultaneous recognition and reconciliation of difference. This is just as true on an individual level (Ralph and Aurora) as on a historical

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[103] "CHECKER, *verb transitive*", sense 2. Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828). http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/checker (accessed November 8, 2018).
[104] James, *Sense*, 36.
[105] James, *Sense*, 40.
[106] James, *Sense*, 36.

level (1820 and 1900). The fact that Ralph cannot escape what Thomas Bender calls the 'uncertainties' of the cosmopolitan 'domain' is the moral drama of the story. Indeed, James's failure to finish the novel gives it an added irony, since its fragmentary nature underlines the cosmopolitan predicament presented. It consists in the inability to escape from the materials which one is given even by an apparently supernatural process such as time travel, or its real-world counterpart, ever faster and more comfortable 'space travel' by land and sea (it was not yet viable to travel commercially by air).

The materials Ralph is given are in a strange way immaterial, however, in the face of a wider problem of communication. Ralph's desire to be a historian is confounded by his uncertainty about how to behave once the past, in the form of the house and the uncanny portrait of his ancestor, is actually present to him. When Ralph sees his own face in the portrait, he is torn between 'his pressing need to communicate' the revelation and 'the equal [need]—the profound policy—of silence; than which conflict nothing more in his life had tormented him.'[107] The conflict is more than the conflict of practical need versus shyness; it is the dilemma of the historian unable to communicate with the past and of the 'cosmopolite' unable to communicate adequately with other people in his orbit, unsure of where common ties end and cultural obstacles begin. He chooses to visit the American Ambassador in London, not as an American émigré but as a stray exile, someone who 'had never yet *had* for the world—yes, and perhaps too for himself—so much to rest on as in the appearance he presented.'[108] Appearances are of present importance, but Ralph's appearance is also what connects him – ancestrally, via the portrait – to the past.

It is significant that Ralph is connected to the Ambassador through 'friends of friends' who have made him 'more "introduced" than he had ever been to anyone'.[109] James's quotation marks highlight the strangeness of such letters of introduction in a cosmopolitan diplomatic society where appearances are both essential and facile. It is not Ralph's own effort, but his friends' communications 'from over the sea', which enable him to be seen by the Ambassador: the latter represents 'high urbanity', but only 'good manners' make Ralph call on him.[110] Ralph does not see himself as an American but as a friend of friends under a personal rather than a patriotic obligation:

[107] James, *Sense*, 87.
[108] James, *Sense*, 88.
[109] James, *Sense*, 89.
[110] James, *Sense*, 89.

> It was sufficient that the representative of his country should be pre-eminent, accomplished, witty and kind, and that, much addicted to good cigars, he should usually be accessible at about six o'clock.[111]

Grammatically, 'his' can denote that Ambassador as well as Ralph: the ambiguity makes Ralph a nominal American at most. Amiability and personal accessibility take precedence over national community.

Ralph situates his experiences within a tradition of tall-tale-telling nomadic expatriates, saying to the Ambassador, 'I know but too well […] that nine compatriots out of ten approach you with a Story. But no strayed maniac among them can have bored you with one like mine.'[112] Extending the 'strayed maniac' image to breaking point, and blurring the lines between fact and fiction, Ralph tells the Ambassador, 'The point is that I'm not myself' […] 'I'm somebody else.'[113] But 'I'm not in fact nearly so different [as before] […] 'I'm still a gentleman, thank God; and no bigger fool, either, than I already was' […] '[i]f I'm so very much the same thing I'm still an American, you see—and not a Briton.'[114] The denial of being a Briton, tagged on to the confirmation of being still an American, has the effect of facetiousness and special pleading for the Ambassador's sake: '"I'm awfully glad of that!" the Ambassador laughed.'[115] The 'great point' is what Ralph calls 'our [his and his ancestor's] common ground', the only 'difference' being 'our age' 'in the sense of time.'[116] Ralph admits that his ancestor 'was in a perfect prime that it was a joy, as a fellow-countryman, to behold',[117] later explaining that 'we have definitely exchanged [personalities]' but '[o]ur duality is so far from diminished that it's only the greater—by our formulation, each to the other, of the so marked difference in our interest.'[118] Ralph is showing his ancestor the future; his ancestor is showing him the past: therefore 'we're at the opposite poles—or at least in quite different places.'[119]

This sense of commonality surmounted by difference is borne out when Ralph returns to Mansfield Square. Having bid the Ambassador goodbye, Ralph undergoes a new experience that equates his sense of the past with a sense of the world as a whole:

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[111] James, *Sense*, 89-90.
[112] James, *Sense*, 91.
[113] James, *Sense*, 95.
[114] James, *Sense*, 98.
[115] James, *Sense*, 98.
[116] James, *Sense*, 98.
[117] James, *Sense*, 99.
[118] James, *Sense*, 103.
[119] James, *Sense*, 104.

> Our young man was after that aware of a position of such eminence on the upper doorstep as made him, his fine rat-tat-tat-ah of the knocker achieved, see the whole world, the waiting, the wondering, the shrunkenly staring representative of his country included, far, far, in fact at last quite abysmally below him. Whether these had been rapid or rather retarded stages he was never really to make out. Everything had come to him through an increasingly thick *other* medium; the medium to which the opening door of the house gave at once an extension that was like an extraordinarily strong odour inhaled—an inward and inward warm reach that his bewildered judge would literally have seen swallow him up; though perhaps with the supreme pause of the determined diver about to plunge just marked in him before the closing of the door again placed him on the right side and the whole world as he had known it on the wrong.[120]

The 'whole world' is ostensibly the world of 1900 that Ralph leaves behind, and yet in another sense the 'world', the sum of humanly perceived time and space, still exists beyond what Ralph 'had known' before or will know in 1820. Ralph's confrontation is therefore not only with the world as it is at a particular time and place, but also as it has always been above and beyond the superficial differences that distinguish him from his ancestor. For this reason, although the time travel scenario is escapist and fantastical, it is also a metaphor for the triumph of past over future: the future is entirely unknowable, but the past is not entirely beyond our ken. To 'take' things 'for clearness in their order', as the narrator had first proposed, is to impose the standards of history onto what is, in lived experience, contingent and seemingly random; it is also, like the writing of history, an enterprise that employs the devices of fiction. The possessive pronoun in 'representative of his country' again refers ambiguously to the Ambassador as well as to Ralph: the latter is more accurately described as a citizen of a world suddenly reduced in size but re-embodied in a temporal dimension.

Frank Kermode has observed that '[w]orld history, the imposition of a plot on time, is a substitute for myth.'[121] If 'world history' in this narratological sense is a substitute for myth, 'world history' in a Kantian sense – 'Nature's secret plan' – can also be classified as mythological. In the 1900 draft of *The Sense of the Past*, James finds that language can impose a plot on the past but cannot so easily impose a plot on the future. 'Nature's secret plan' for humankind – mankind's cosmopolitan destiny – can only be ascertained, for James, as terminating in the present. James can devise a time travel scenario, therefore, in which the past is revisited in order for the present to be better understood; but unlike H. G. Wells, he makes no attempt to broach the blankness and emptiness of the future in order to put the present in its place. Ralph's 'Essay in Aid of the Reading of History' is an oblique Jamesian

[120] James, *Sense*, 112-113.
[121] Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*, 43.

reference to the Kantian idea of history with a cosmopolitan purpose: Ralph's accidental cosmopolitanism in the world of 1900 is buttressed by the fullest possible realization of his sense of the past, which in its intensity obliterates his nominal identity as an American.

The Sense of the Past is therefore a novel about the writing of history with a cosmopolitan purpose. But the novel's chief dilemma – and one of the reasons it breaks off, unfinished – is that wordless human affection becomes something that interposes and disrupts the viability of such a purpose. The language of affection exists as a blankness that makes the plot, and the purpose, fizzle out. The narrative ends as the 1820 Ralph, having entangled himself with his eccentric relatives, declares to Nan – perhaps disingenuously – his intention of marrying Molly:

> "I hope with all my heart I shall make her happy, but she's splendid," Ralph gravely, almost sententiously, said, "beyond any power of mine to show her off." He clung to his gravity, which somehow steadied him—so odd it was that the sense of her understanding wouldn't be abated, which even a particular lapse, he could see …[122]

The breaking off of the narrative is itself (ironically) 'a particular lapse' which confounds the sense of the reader's (and the narrator's) conclusive understanding. The past for James, like Molly for Ralph, is, finally, 'splendid […] beyond any power of mine to show her off'. This recognition itself has a 'gravity' to which James felt he must cling. Whatever the turns of fortune that befall Ralph, his inability to corroborate and validate his feelings and experiences in language finally overwhelms him and thus consumes James's narrative. The precariousness of the balance between fortune and will, between a cosmopolitanism that is accidental and one that is self-consciously willed, in the context of a changing turn-of-the-century world and applied to the indirectly 'cosmopolite' character, is one that *The Sense of the* Past is uniquely poised to dramatize.

What Maisie Knew, The Wings of the Dove and *The Sense of the Past* all dramatize the essential reciprocity of cosmopolitanism and history. As Ross Posnock puts it regarding another great Jamesian duality, 'Culture holds fast […] but not before its dictatorship over nature has been toppled. The result is that nature and culture in [James's] fiction […] exist in a relationship of reciprocal incitation'.[123] The same 'relationship of reciprocal initiation' exists between different versions of cosmopolitanism tied either to the accidents of fortune, to

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[122] James, *Sense*, 281.
[123] Ross Posnock, *The Trial of Curiosity: Henry James, William James, and the Challenge of Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 4.

an idealistic notion of universality, to a pragmatic impetus to collaborate, or to a consciousness of history without which cosmopolitanism is merely facile. These versions of cosmopolitanism compete with each other but are united by the importance of the past; they are part of the exchange and interplay of difference by which James makes sense of the world in its strangeness. In the next chapter, I argue that the artistic example of Henrik Ibsen, as translated into English by William Archer during the 1890s, caused James to reconsider his own identity as a 'cosmopolite'; that James in turn makes us see Ibsen's plays as extraordinarily multivalent, combining cosmopolitanism and provincialism, naturalism and formalism, realism and symbolism, moral idealism and anti-idealist aestheticism; and that Ibsen's plays in Archer's translations dramatize different versions of a 'provincial cosmopolitanism' that Archer, as a social and cultural critic, himself theorized.

Chapter 5: 'The joy of life' and competing cosmopolitanisms in Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* and *Emperor and Galilean*

i. 'The joy of life', 'true, inward happiness', and Henrik Ibsen's cosmopolitanism

In this chapter, I will argue that Henrik Ibsen, read in William Archer's original English translations, is a disguised cosmopolitan writer for whom 'the joy of life' (*livsglæde*, or 'life-gladness') is a symbol of the world citizenship towards which his provincial characters, sometimes unwittingly, aspire; that the poetic drama *Peer Gynt* (1867) dramatizes two versions of cosmopolitanism, idealist and pragmatic, with Gynt as a historian-cosmopolite figure; and that *Emperor and Galilean* (1873), Ibsen's 'world-historic' drama, in its first half ('Caesar's Apostasy') depicts an idealist cosmopolitanism in the character of Julian the Apostate, but in its second half ('The Emperor Julian') subtly deconstructs that cosmopolitan ideal. I then show how Ibsen's plays (as translated by Archer) and their effects, made Henry James, Ibsen's shrewdest critic in English, reimagine his own cosmopolitan identity from the 1890s onwards. James, finding Ibsen to combine cosmopolitanism and provincialism, naturalism and symbolism, anti-idealism and formalism, makes us – readers of Archer's and subsequent English translations – see Ibsen's plays, from *The Pillars of Society* to *When We Dead Awaken*, as extraordinarily multivalent. Finally, this chapter argues that Ibsen's canonization in the English-speaking world between 1900 and 1914 must be understood in the context of a more politically polarized understanding of cosmopolitanism, in which hopes and fears for the future are rooted in an awareness of international, border-fluctuating history. Cosmopolitanism, so fashionable in the literature of the *fin-de-siècle* (as the journal *Cosmopolitan* testifies), became dubious in the new century, as old nationalisms flared up once more. Consequently, cosmopolitanism needed rationalizing and pragmatizing through rational, sociological analysis. Central to this phase are Archer's late essays on Ibsen, and his anonymously published polemic, *The Great Analysis: A Plea for a Rational World-Order* (1912), whose philosophy of provincialized cosmopolitanism Archer takes from Ibsen's drama. Ibsen himself, I argue, moves towards an anti-idealist, pragmatic cosmopolitanism even as he permits many of his characters, beginning with Julian, to retain an idealist cosmopolitanism in order to give their lives sufficient meaning.

In his fiction, James makes us notice the transformative experience of reading or watching an Ibsen play by his observation of Ibsen's implicit, recurrent, symbolically reinforced

distinction between (mere) existence and life. He also pays more than glancing attention in his fiction to the implications of Ibsen's concept of *livsglæde* ('life-gladness', or 'the joy of life' in Archer's translation). In the last chapter, I quoted James's use of the expression in *The Wings of the Dove* to describe the personified Piazza San Marco as a historical witness to 'the joy of life'. James uses it once more in the same novel: Mrs Stringham wonders at Milly Theale's 'mystifying mood' in a Swiss hotel, reflecting how 'one had only to admit that her [Milly's] complaint was in fact but the excess of the joy of life, and everything *did* then fit.'[1] Mrs Stringham's associations, between illness and recuperation, moodiness and joy, are entirely consonant with the atmosphere created by Ibsenian drama. James also uses the expression in *What Maisie Knew*: Beale Farange, Maisie's father, is said to have 'the look of the joy of life'.[2]

James, then, assumes his readers' awareness of Ibsen in Archer's translation. To attribute to someone 'an excess of the joy of life' or 'the look of the joy of life', rather than simply 'the joy of life', strongly suggests James attributing prior knowledge of this *cliché* to his readers, as well as suggesting an understanding on James's part that 'the joy of life' was a dubious attribution (it can be excessive; it is a misleading 'look'). It also suggests the impact of the Ibsenian stage, with its intentional correlation between the verbal and the visual, on James's descriptive prose. Archer's translation of *livsglæde* was indebted to the French expression, *la joie de vivre*, as his translator's note confirms.[3] But Ibsen's concept of *livsglæde* is not simply a platitude. It is essential to his cosmopolitanism, both in its association with heterogeneous pleasurable experience, and in its connection to his concept of *Verdensborgerdomsforpagtning* (Archer translates this as 'cosmopolitanisation'[4]) in the verse play *Peer Gynt* (1867), which I consider in this chapter.

The irony of Mrs Stringham's diagnosis of 'an excess of the joy of life' – Milly, as Mrs Stringham knows, is suffering from, indeed dying of, an unnamed illness – is identical to the dramatic irony to be found in *Ghosts*. In Ibsen's play, Oswald's father, Captain (or Chamberlain) Alving, is described by Pastor Manders as having '[i]n his youth […]

[1] James, *Wings*, 140.
[2] James, *Maisie*, 16.
[3] The note reads: '"Var en særdeles livsglad mand"—literally, "was a man who took the greatest pleasure in life," *la joie de vivre*—an expression which frequently recurs in the play' (Henrik Ibsen, *Ghosts, An Enemy of the People, The Wild Duck*, edited and translated by William Archer [Henrik Ibsen's Prose Dramas, II] [London: Walter Scott, 1890], 32).
[4] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt*, 125.

overflowed with the joy of life'.[5] Oswald later applies the expression to Regina, the family maid with whom he is in love without knowing she is his half-sister (his father's daughter). Oswald tells her, '—then it flashed upon me that my salvation lay in her [Regina]; for I saw that she was full of the joy of life.'[6] Mrs Alving, disturbed by this, is also sceptical: 'The joy of life? Can there be salvation in that?'[7] Oswald resists her scepticism, however, when she presses him to explain his meaning:

> OSWALD. Ah, the joy of life, mother – that's a thing you don't know much about in these parts. I've never felt it here.
>
> MRS. ALVING. Not when you're with me?
>
> OSWALD. Not when I'm at home. But you don't understand that.
>
> MRS. ALVING. Yes, yes; I think I almost understand it—now.
>
> OSWALD. And then, too, the joy of work! At bottom, it's the same thing. But that, too, you know nothing about.
>
> MRS. ALVING. Perhaps you're right, Oswald; tell me more about it.
>
> OSWALD. Well, I only mean that people here are brought up to believe that work is a curse and a punishment for sin, and that life is something miserable, something we want to be done with, the sooner the better.
>
> MRS. ALVING. "A vale of tears," yes; and we take care to make it one.
>
> OSWALD. But in the great world people won't hear of such things. There, nobody really believes such doctrines any longer. There, you feel it bliss and ecstasy merely to draw the breath of life. Mother, have you noticed that everything I've painted has turned upon the joy of life? – light and sunshine and glorious air and faces radiant with happiness. That's why I'm afraid of remaining at home with you.[8]

Oswald's last line is ominous of his illness, but his enthusiasm for 'the joy of life', coterminous with 'the joy of work', distinguishes Oswald from his mother, who is sceptical but interested, and Pastor Manders, for whom 'the joy of life' is unambiguously an agent of damnation rather than salvation.

Combining a trace of Pastor Manders' disapproval with something of Oswald's enthusiasm, Mrs Alving returns to the subject of 'the joy of life' in connection with Oswald's late father.

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[5] Ibsen, *Ghosts, Enemy, Duck* (Archer), 32.
[6] Ibsen, *Ghosts, Enemy, Duck* (Archer), 76.
[7] Ibsen, *Ghosts, Enemy, Duck* (Archer), 76.
[8] Ibsen, *Ghosts, Enemy, Duck* (Archer), 77.

She is evidently torn over whether 'the joy of life' is a desirable or a regrettable attribute, and her confusion in turn confuses Oswald, for whom 'the joy of life' is associated with a life quite different from what he imagines his mother's to have been:

> MRS. ALVING [to Oswald]. You spoke of the joy of life; and at that word a new light burst for me over my life and all it has contained.
>
> OSWALD (*shakes his head*). I don't understand you.
>
> MRS. ALVING. You ought to have known your father when he was a young lieutenant. He was brimming over with the joy of life!
>
> OSWALD. Yes, I know he was.
>
> MRS. ALVING. It was like a breezy day only to look at him. And what exuberant strength and vitality there was in him!
>
> OSWALD. Well—?
>
> MRS. ALVING. Well then, child of joy as he was—for he *was* like a child at that time—he had to live here at home in a half-grown town, which had no joys to offer him—only dissipations. He had no object in life – only an official position. He had no work into which he could throw himself heart and soul; he had only business. He had not a single comrade that knew what the joy of life meant—only loungers and boon-companions—
>
> […]
>
> MRS. ALVING. Your poor father found no outlet for the overpowering joy of life that was in him. And I brought no brightness into his home. [9]

To be 'here at home in a half-grown town' was stifling for Captain Alving – most of Ibsen's plays take place in stifling rooms – whereas Oswald, residing in Paris and Rome, has seen 'the great world' and so has found an objective correlative for his *joie de vivre*.

At this point, Mrs Alving admits almost casually, while Regina is present, that Regina is Captain Alving's daughter and thus Oswald's half-sister who 'by rights […] should be in this house – just like my own boy.'[10] Regina, having listened carefully to the character analysis of Captain Alving, is unsurprised and unperturbed by this revelation, but she longs to leave, since 'I, too, have the joy of life in me, Mrs. Alving.'[11] Throughout *Ghosts*, Ibsen is trying to describe the idea of life lived to the full, divorced from mere existence and purged of bitterness and regret. Yet the dramatic irony of the expression in *Ghosts* is obvious: Oswald's

[9] Ibsen, *Ghosts, Enemy, Duck* (Archer), 89-90.
[10] Ibsen, *Ghosts, Enemy, Duck* (Archer), 91.
[11] Ibsen, *Ghosts, Enemy, Duck* (Archer), 91.

father's 'joy of life', a kind of hereditary burden as much as the unnamed sexual disease, has had awful, fatal consequences for himself, his wife, his daughter, and, above all, his son. Archer points out that the Norwegian title of *Ghosts*, *Gengangere*, 'means literally "Again-goers,", spirits that "walk." The French word "Revenants" comes nearer the sense than the English word *Ghosts*'.[12] What returns to Oswald, and perhaps Regina, then, is the 'joy of life' itself, in the fatal form of sexually transmitted disease. Indeed, Regina and Oswald interpret their inborn 'joy of life' as a reason for escaping their small Norwegian town, or else, they imply, they risk falling into the same sordidness as Captain Alving and Regina's mother. Mrs Alving, who does not claim 'the joy of life' for herself, nevertheless finds it an illuminating substitute, as an image of life's meaning, for the biblical 'vale of tears'.

Adrian Poole calls 'the joy of life' 'a *cliché* of the 1890s'.[13] The popularity of the expression was bound up, in part, with Henri Bergson's late nineteenth-century popularization of 'vitalism', 'a philosophy which ascribed to living organisms a vital force that could not be explained in terms of physical and chemical processes alone', and which 'in the wake of evolutionary theory […] took on an added dimension.'[14] The phrase's popularity in literary terms was also influenced by the vogue for Naturalism in prose fiction, in particular by Émile Zola's novel of 1884, *La Joie de Vivre* (translated anonymously as *The Joy of Life* in 1901,[15] after its status as cliché was secure).[16] Zola's novel had popularized the expression in French, but Archer's translation of Ibsen's *Ghosts* further disseminated the English translation. Oscar Wilde, writing to Frank Harris after his release from prison, and echoing Oswald and Regina's sense of an inherited predisposition, distinguished 'the joy of life' from fleeting emotion.[17] In 1905, the year before Ibsen's death, Arthur Symons used the expression to describe his mother, portraying her as a freethinking Ibsenian heroine.[18] But the expression's links to cosmopolitanism, perhaps because of its instant-*cliché* status and its connection with

[12] Ibsen, *Ghosts, Enemy, Duck* (Archer), iii.
[13] James, *Maisie*, 277.
[14] Anne Fernihough, *Freewomen and Supermen: Edwardian Radicals and Literary Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 25.
[15] Émile Zola, *The Joy of Life [La Joie de Vivre]*, edited with a preface by Ernest Alfred Vizetelly (London: Chatto & Windus, 1901).
[16] Zola himself inaugurated the Naturalist literary movement in an essay of 1880, in which he argued for 'a literature governed by science', and in particular for what he called 'the experimental novel' (Emile Zola, *The Experimental Novel and Other Essays*, translated from the French by Belle M. Sherman [New York: Cassell, 1893], 1).
[17] 'I have pleasures, and passions, but the joy of life is gone' (Oscar Wilde, 'To Frank Harris [End February 1898]', in *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, edited by Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis [London: Fourth Estate, 2000], 1025).
[18] 'She had the joy of life, she was sensitive to every aspect of the world […]' (Arthur Symons, *Spiritual Adventures* [1905], edited with an introduction by Nicholas Freeman [Cambridge: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2017], 127).

French Naturalism, went curiously unexamined by Anglophone critics. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the decadent poet Ernest Dowson, part of Wilde's circle, claims the first recorded use of *la joie de vivre* (later to be used without the definite article) as an English loanword. His use of the term, in a private letter of 1889, questions what must have been its assumed connection with lowlife and *la vie de bohème* (another nineteenth-century *cliché*). 'I do not suppose "la joie de vivre"', Dowson writes, 'will be revealed to me any more at Limehouse [in the East End of London] than in the Temple [a West End legal district].'[19] Dowson's speculation echoes Arthur Symons' and Arnold Bennett's judgements of Ibsen's plays, in which passions, both joyful and woeful, are shown to exist anywhere, rich and poor, and the distinction between metropolitan and provincial collapses in the face of individual consciousness and experience.[20]

Dowson's private remark, commandeering the French *cliché* and deconstructing it, was echoed by Ibsen in his public speeches. On a brief return to Norway in 1885, Ibsen addressed the newly enfranchised working men of Trondheim, expressing in affectionate but serious terms the necessity of 'the joy of life' to his own incipient, pragmatic, down-to-earth cosmopolitanism, and to the general uplift of Norwegian society:

> Eight days ago I returned to Norway after an absence of eleven years. During these eight days at home I have *experienced more of the joy of life* [*følt mere Livsglæde*[21]] [my emphasis] than during all the eleven years abroad. I have found immense progress in most lines, and I have seen that the nation to which I most closely belong has approached the rest of Europe considerably more than formerly.[22]

Ibsen then expresses disappointment that '[a] ruling majority does not grant the individual either liberty of faith or liberty of expression beyond an arbitrarily fixed limit', and claims that 'before we may be said to have attained real liberty', '[a]n element of nobility must enter into political life'.[23] For all its doubt about the efficacy of democracy in liberating the spirit, this speech anticipates Ibsen's later, subtler, more tentative speeches to literary audiences whose familiarity with his work could be taken for granted, but whose understanding of it was inevitably partial and subjective, given their own individual preconceptions of Ibsen and his work. Ibsen's brief return to the country of his birth, the nation to whom he is closest in a

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[19] "joie de vivre, n.". OED Online. December 2020. Oxford University Press. https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2446/view/Entry/101526?redirectedFrom=joie+de+vivre (accessed January 30, 2021).
[20] I examine Symons's and Bennett's judgments of Ibsen's plays at the beginning of Chapter 6.
[21] Henrik Ibsen, 'Tale til arbeidernes fanetog i Trondheim 14. juni 1885'. https://www.ibsen.uio.no/SAK_P18850614Arb_Dagbl.xhtml?tema=taler (accessed June 23, 2020).
[22] Henrik Ibsen, *Speeches and New Letters*, translated by Arne Kildal with an introduction by Lee M. Hollander and a Bibliographical Appendix (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1910), 53.
[23] Ibsen, *Speeches and New Letters*, 53.

linguistic and cultural sense, more than the time spent abroad, generates the 'joy of life' that fuels his artistic creativity and critical collaboration: he would write *Rosmersholm*, with its aristocratic, newly liberal hero, soon afterwards.

At celebrations for his seventieth birthday in 1898, with his most famous plays behind him, Ibsen gave an audience of his admirers in Oslo a candid statement of his feelings as an internationally discussed writer who had chosen, for the greater part of his adult life, exile from the country of his birth:

> I regret deeply that I have come into so little contact with many of those who are to continue my work in this country. Not because I would have wished to influence them, but so that I myself might achieve a deeper understanding. And I would especially have used this closer contact to dispel a misconception which has in many ways been a hindrance to me—I mean, the idea that unqualified happiness is a necessary consequence of the rare and saga-like fate which has befallen me, of winning fame in many foreign lands. I have, too, won friendship and understanding in those countries. That is the most important thing of all.
>
> But true, inward happiness does not fall from heaven. It must be earned at a price which may often seem heavy. For the point is this that he who has won a home in many foreign lands feels in his heart of hearts nowhere truly at home—scarcely even in the country of his birth.
>
> But perhaps this may happen yet. I should like to think of this evening as a starting-point.[24]

Although this speech was by no means valedictory (he not only reacquainted himself with the Norwegian literary world, but continued to write), Ibsen is careful here to distinguish between 'a deeper understanding' of his own work learned from other Norwegians, the 'friendship and understanding' of foreigners, and 'true, inward happiness'. The first object he has missed in self-imposed exile, the second he has 'won' during that exile, and the third he is yet to achieve.

The second may be 'the most important', but the third, the most personal, is the hardest earned. '[T]rue, inward happiness' (*indre, virkelige lykke*[25]) depends, Ibsen implies, upon exile itself, which inevitably causes a feeling of homelessness, but which nevertheless mitigates the complacency of the false, outwardly happy person. Happiness is not to be sought in some particular place – objectively, it is no more likely to be found in Rome or Dresden than Skien, just as for Dowson *la joie de vivre* is no more to be revealed in Limehouse than Temple – but inwardly fashioned from the accumulated experiences of many

[24] Quoted in Michael Meyer, *Ibsen: A Biography*, abridged by the author (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1974), 801.
[25] Henrik Ibsen, 'Tale ved festmiddag i Kristiania 23. mars 1898'. https://www.ibsen.uio.no/SAK_P18980323Kris_u.xhtml?tema=taler l (accessed June 22, 2020).

places. Ibsen's *livsglæde*, which Archer, as we have seen, implicitly linked to Zola's expression, *la joie de vivre*, is an outward and visible sign of pleasure in life, albeit pleasure that is morally suspect and potentially detrimental. But 'true' happiness, Ibsen takes pains to emphasize, is 'inward', something private and personal.

Ibsen at seventy seeks the 'deeper understanding' of his own work through listening to the responses of his compatriots: foreign acclaim is not enough. But he is not at home 'even in the country of his birth', and this is a part of the 'price' one pays for 'true, inward happiness'. For Ibsen, one does not travel to other countries in order to find happiness in those places, but to find a sense of difference which, combined with the superficial winning of a home in those places, and continued or renewed contact with the people one has left behind, may lead to internal happiness, a kind of peace caused by the dissemination of oneself across the world. It is uncertain if Ibsen was aware that 'the joy of life' had become, owing to Archer's translation, an Anglophone *cliché* during the 1890s. It is well known that Ibsen disliked Zola, author of *La Joie de Vivre*: famously, he claimed that Zola 'descends into the sewer to bathe in it; I, to cleanse it.'[26] Presumably, Ibsen would have disliked Archer's conflation of his own idea with Zola's, although Archer's translations were given his unexamined approval,[27] and Ibsen must have been aware of Zola's novel, whose title is poised, like Ibsen's plays *in toto,* somewhere between vehement anti-idealist irony and idealism-for-sanity's-sake.

The idea of *joie de vivre,* in any case, was in the air in the 1890s. In his Oslo speech, as if wary of this confusion and proliferation of ideas derived from his plays, Ibsen hints at a necessary distinction between the ideas contained in his art and his reflections on his own life. Not only does Ibsen seek to dispel the notion that, for him personally, 'unqualified happiness' must have been the necessary outcome of his fame (he would squarely lay this rumour to rest the following year in the autobiographical *When We Dead Awaken*); he also implicitly distinguishes 'true, inward happiness' from the *livsglæde* of the plays, *livsglæde* being a coinage that had taken on a life of its own, picked up and perhaps misconstrued in England and America (of whom Henry James is the joint representative). *Livsglæde*, 'life-gladness', Ibsen implies, looks outward and enjoys, publicly and ephemerally; although one may be predisposed to it, as Oswald makes clear it is also coterminous with the impulse

[26] Quoted in Meyer, *Ibsen*, 515.
[27] Ibsen wrote to Archer in November 1889, 'I shall always feel that I owe you a great debt of gratitude for all that you have done, and are still doing, to introduce my works into England' (Henrik Ibsen, *The Correspondence of Henrik Ibsen*, the translation edited by Mary Morison [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1905], 427).

towards artistic creation. *Indre, virkelige lykke*, 'inward, true happiness', by contrast, looks inward, processing the lived experience and reconstituting it so that it becomes an integral part of the subject, something wholly private and ideally (if not in practice) permanent. The one is impulsive, the other reflective. If Ibsen is an ambiguous proponent of *livsglæde* in the plays, he is a seeker after *indre, virkelige lykke* in his own life. *Peer Gynt*, however, is the creative germ of this artistic and personal ambiguity.

ii. *Peer Gynt*: idealist and pragmatic cosmopolitanisms

Cosmopolitanism for European and American readers in the mid-nineteenth century was still largely associated with a *wanderlust* exemplified by Goethe's *Italian Journey* (1816-17) and a world-weary cynicism exemplified by Lord Byron's self-presentation in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-18) and *Don Juan* (1819-24). Byron in particular provided the template for the world-weary, cosmopolitan cynic as a stock character for realist novelists, as Helen Small has argued with reference to Honoré de Balzac as well as George Eliot, well into the mid-century.[28] Ibsen's most recent biographer, Ivo de Figueiredo, notes that Ibsen lived in Sorrento near the Bay of Naples when writing *Ghosts* in the summer of 1881: 'Goethe, Byron and Keats had lived there before [the Ibsen family], and it was here that most of Ibsen's new play [*Ghosts*] was written.'[29] Ibsen's writing of *Ghosts* therefore marks an intermediary or transitional moment: cosmopolitanism's earlier practitioners, Goethe and Byron (Keats is secondary in terms of international influence), are directly confronted by Ibsen in his new choice of abode, and exorcised or rewritten in the writing of his new play. As I have argued, *Ghosts* depends for some of its power on an idea of cosmopolitanism allied to *joie de vivre* and an ambition to better oneself by expanding one's horizons.

In *Peer Gynt*, Ibsen's first popularly successful drama, 'cosmopolitanisation' – the process of reinventing oneself as cosmopolitanism, Archer's translation of an Ibsenian neologism – is a notable source of humour, but this humour has a dark edge that prefigures the turn-of-the-century idea of cosmopolitanism as something made viable not by literary or historical exchange but by faceless international capitalism. While it would be anachronistic to consider *Peer Gynt* in terms of later connotations attached to the word 'cosmopolitan', it is nevertheless true that Ibsen's comic dramatization of a cosmopolite character set the ball rolling, not only in his own dramatic confrontation of the issue, but also in the critical debate

[28] Small, 'George Eliot and the Cosmopolitan Cynic', 85.
[29] Ivo de Figueiredo, *Henrik Ibsen: The Man and the Mask*, translated by Robert Ferguson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019), 425.

surrounding it and out of which the later connotations gradually emerged. If, according to Narve Fulsås and Tore Rem, Ibsen 'even held *Peer Gynt* to be so peculiarly Norwegian as to be untranslatable',[30] this is highly ironic in view of the play's overt concern with 'cosmopolitanisation', with a broadening of horizons that must also, of necessity, become a deepening of historical consciousness, and with the translatability and transmutability of experience.

Peer is first introduced as an innocent, quixotic, dreamy figure, full of the joy of life but unsure of its necessary outlets. He is animated by a desire to build a personal kingdom for himself, away from the strictures of his remote farm life. As a youth, he imagines himself as an emperor:

> […] All the world knows him,
> Kaiser Peer Gynt, and his thousands of henchmen.
> Sixpenny pieces and glittering shillings
> over the roadway he scatters like pebbles.
> Rich as a lord grows each man in the parish.
> High o'er the ocean Peer Gynt goes a-riding.
> Engelland's [*sic*] Prince on the seashore awaits him;
> there too await him all Engelland's maidens.
> Engelland's nobles and Engelland's Kaiser,
> see him come riding and rise from their banquet.
> Raising his crown, hear the Kaiser address him—[31]

Archer's translation neatly captures the comedy inherent in imaginings which we take to be delusions of grandeur, but which turn out to be prophetic. In Act IV, which takes place in Morocco, Gynt claims he 'bore the name of Croesus'[32] – that is, he was considered to be enormously rich – amongst his business associates; while in Egypt, he is hailed as 'the Interpreters' Kaiser – on the basis of Self'.[33] Gynt's imagined army of obedient liegemen is the one aspect of his youthful fantasy that does not come to fruition; rather, Ibsen reserves this fate, with its attendant problems, for his dramatization of a historical emperor, Julian (in *Emperor and Galilean,* to which I turn later in this chapter).

Gynt's journey takes him from his family farm in Norway to troll-inhabited fjords, from Morocco to Egypt, and back to Norway via a shipwreck. The late Geoffrey Hill, whose recent

[30] Fulsås and Rem, *Ibsen, Scandinavia and the Making of a World Drama*, 241.
[31] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 26.
[32] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 130.
[33] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 184.

verse translation of *Peer Gynt* is idiomatically more experimental and less faithful to the original than Archer's, claimed in an interview appended to his translation that 'the larger, cosmopolitan world that Gynt inhabits is rather tedious, filled with nationalists, reformers or businessmen who are always repeating themselves in their variously stereotyped ways', and that '[t]he world's variety [for Gynt] turns out to be monotonous; for Gynt, everything, any experience, can be exchanged for anything else. But that very monotony and monomania can in themselves be highly varied.'[34] One species of this monotony is that of the cosmopolitan gathering at the beginning of Act IV. Gynt is transformed between Acts III and IV, following his mother's death, into an identifiable 'cosmopolite' with all the nineteenth-century *accoutrements* of such an identity. In Archer's rendering of Ibsen's precise stage directions, Gynt, wearing 'elegant travelling-dress, with a gold-rimmed double eye-glass hanging at his waistcoat', is found 'doing the honours at the head of the table' with an American, a Frenchman, a German, and a Swede '[o]n the southwest coast of Morocco', next to 'a steam yacht, flying the Norwegian and American colours'.[35] But he is pragmatic rather than idealist, disclaiming personal responsibility as host for the dinner his guests enjoy: 'I share the honours with my cash, with cook and steward—'[36] And later: 'I've done my history piecemeal; I never had time for more. And, as one needs in days of trial some certainty to place one's trust in, I took religion intermittently. That way it goes more smoothly down. One should not read to swallow all, but rather see what one has use for.'[37] To this, Mr Cotton, the American, exclaims, 'Ay, that is practical!'[38] Asked what he trades in, Gynt admits, 'negro slaves for Carolina, and idol-images for China.'[39] Mr Cotton, whose name evokes both the raw material of North American slavery and the American Puritan divine, Cotton Mather, is silent at this revelation, but the Frenchman, M. Ballon, and the Swede, Trumpeterstraale, are horrified: '*Fi donc*!'; 'The devil, Uncle Gynt!'[40]

Herr von Eberkopf, one of the Germans, paradoxically combines pride in German culture with an awareness of an idealist cosmopolitanism that he associates with German philosophy. Before Gynt reveals the sources of his new wealth, M. Ballon says Gynt has 'a certain—what's the word—?', to which question Eberkopf (pre-empting the French *je ne sais quoi*)

[34] Henrik Ibsen, *Peer Gynt and Brand*, in versions by Geoffrey Hill, introduced by Janet Garton, general editor Tore Rem (The New Penguin Ibsen) (London: Penguin, 2016), 349.
[35] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 124.
[36] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 125.
[37] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt and Brand* (Hill), 242.
[38] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 129.
[39] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 130.
[40] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 130.

replies fulsomely. Archer's translation captures the abstract and specifically Germanic nature of Eberkopf's cosmopolitan ideal:

> A dash,
> A tinge of free-soul contemplation,
> and cosmopolitanisation,
> an outlook through the cloudy rifts
> by narrow prejudice unhemmed,
> a stamp of high illumination,
> an *Ur-natur* [original nature], with lore of life,
> to crown the trilogy, united.
> *Nicht-wahr* [Is it not], Monsieur, 'twas that you meant?[41]

Archer notes that '*Ur-natur*' is used in the original, but interpolates '*Nicht-wahr*'. He also admits in a footnote that 'cosmopolitanisation' 'may not be a very lucid or even very precise rendering of *Verdensborgerdomsforpagtning*; but this line, and indeed the whole speech, is pure burlesque; and the exact sense of nonsense is naturally elusive'.[42] A more literal translation would be 'world-citizenship-tenancy'. Despite Archer's dismissal of the scene as 'pure burlesque', Ibsen's neologism and Archer's translation both capture the idea that cosmopolitanism is a progress or process, not merely an acquired taste. Just as Henry James and other Anglophone critics found in Ibsen's apparent provincialism a disguised cosmopolitanism, so Ibsen understands that cosmopolitanism depends upon internal as much as external states of being, an awareness of things that may be hidden from others as well as ostentatiously displayed.

Archer, in dismissing Eberkopf's speech as 'pure burlesque' and 'nonsense', also misses the connection between Eberkopf, the German nationalist expositor of idealist cosmopolitanism, and Ibsen's idealist characters in the later prose plays. Eberkopf is only the first and most explicit in a line of Ibsen's admirers of the cosmopolitan ideal, including Oswald Alving, Hedda Gabler, Erhart Borkman, and Irene in *When We Dead Awaken*, whose thoughts may be abstract but whose implicit ideal of world citizenship conflicts, inevitably, with the unethical goings-on in the outer world and the perceived narrowness of their day-to-day lives. James Joyce's 1934 poem, 'Epilogue to Ibsen's *Ghosts*', narrated by 'the ghost of Captain Alving', captures the distinction between cosmopolitanism displayed as pragmatic indifference to one's actions and surroundings, and cosmopolitanism as a noble crusade:

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[41] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 125.
[42] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 125.

> Since scuttling ship Vikings like me
> Reck not to whom the blame is laid,
> Y.M.C.A, V.D., T.B.
> Or Harbormaster of Port Said.[43]

Joyce's Captain Alving, reminiscent of Peer Gynt, gives voice to the reality of the unethical world of the businessman abroad: travel has its seamy side, and it is better to accept this than to repress it like Pastor Manders. Oswald, the idealist cosmopolite, is damaged not so much by his father as by a world in which ideals are inevitably smashed by human nature.

Taking his cue from Archer's more subtle inferences of German-influenced idealism, Geoffrey Hill's freer translation of Eberkopf's speech interpolates further German phrases, reinforcing the derivation of Eberkopf's idealism from a specifically German culture:

> A nuance of free spirit we
> detect, combined with, here and there,
> the true vein of world-citizenry,
> a *Weltanschauung, echt und wahr* [world-view, real and true],
> a vision through the storm-clouds breaking,
> all unconfined by prejudice;
> the *Ur-natur*, divine self-seeking,
> *Erhebung* [elevation] of the triune *Kreis* [circle]
> united at the *Krise* [crisis]-joint.[44]

'*Weltanschauung, echt und wahr*', Tore Rem's notes explain, is '[n]ot in the original', nor are the last two lines'; '*Ur-natur*' does, however, appear in the original.[45] The original has no verb: Eberkopf simply lists what he detects, in answer to the Frenchman's enquiry as to what it is that Gynt displays (Hill's 'true vein of world-citizenry' is obviously a free translation of *Verdensborgerdomsforpagtning*).[46] Ibsen's irony here is that Gynt is not an idealist but a pragmatic cosmopolite; Eberkopf, in attributing idealism to the hard-headed Gynt, and deliberately expressing his ideas in German, displays that idealist cosmopolitanism's limitations. Archer's coinage of 'cosmopolitanisation', however, provides a much-needed watchword articulating what he sees, with twenty-five years' hindsight, as a new Ibsenian concept.

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[43] James Joyce, *Poems and 'Exiles'*, edited with an introduction and notes by J. C. C. Mays (London: Penguin, 1992), 94.
[44] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt and Brand* (Hill), 240-241.
[45] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt and Brand* (Hill), 356.
[46] Henrik Ibsen, *Henrik Ibsens Skrifte* [Dano-Norwegian historical-critical edition of Ibsen's complete writings] (Oslo: University of Oslo Press, 2005-10), 17 volumes. https://www.ibsen.uio.no/forside.xhtml. vii.598.

To M. Ballon's direct question, 'You are Norwegian?', Gynt replies 'Yes, by birth; but cosmopolitan in spirit'.[47] This is Archer's literal translation of Ibsen's '*Af Fødsel, ja!* / *Men Verdensborger af Gemyt*'.[48] Although this self-analysis anticipates Gynt's later stated wish to become 'Emperor' 'o'er all the world' (which in turn anticipates *Emperor and Galilean*), Gynt's 'cosmopolitanisation' happens offstage, as it were, between Acts III and IV.[49] If this implies that Gynt has been transformed as if by magic, and can easily be transformed into something else, his musings in Act IV also anticipate the more subtle transformation effected between Parts I and II of *Emperor and Galilean*, in which the Emperor Julian's idealism finds practical obstacles thrown up by the very fact of his having become an autocratic emperor, the universally known 'emperor' of Peer Gynt's boyhood fantasy.

Gynt is more interested in practical power than theoretical imperialism. Eberkopf, half-sensing this, goes even further in his praise of Gynt, claiming that the latter can 'in one glance focus all things'.[50] But when the conversation turns to Gynt's ambitions, Eberkopf's hyperbolic praise is cut short, and the latter's latent nationalism becomes manifest. Gynt reveals the news that the Greeks are in revolt against the Turkish Ottoman Empire, and the party is inspired to join him, assuming he will use his ample resources to fight on the Greek side. Yet he says he will back the Turks, and saunters off, leaving the Hellenophile guests incensed. They each admit to what they had envisaged would happen if they were to emerge victorious on the Greek side: Eberkopf 'saw my gigantic Fatherland's [Germany's] culture […] spread o'er earth and sea'.[51] In spite of Eberkopf's admission of a cultural pan-Germanism, his preoccupation with the idea of cultural unification carries Hegelian and Goethean overtones, as well as Byronic overtones of fighting for Hellas. It establishes idealist cosmopolitanism in the mid-nineteenth century as something discursively powerful and historically significant, even if it is hindered in practice, and prey to rampant competing nineteenth-century nationalisms. Peer Gynt, however, will not conform either to cosmopolitan cynicism or to cosmopolitan idealism; rather, his inclination is to transmute his cosmopolitan experiences into historical understanding.

iii. Peer Gynt as a historian-cosmopolite

[47] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 134.
[48] Henrik Ibsen, *Henrik Ibsens Skrifte*. https://www.ibsen.uio.no/forside.xhtml. vii.607.
[49] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 136.
[50] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 129.
[51] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 143.

If Gynt proves himself the most pragmatic of cosmopolites in the first scene of Act IV, in Act IV, Scene 9, he soliloquizes in a way that demonstrates Hill's claim that 'for Gynt, everything, any experience, can be exchanged for anything else'. Gynt pictures himself not as an emperor or soldier, but as 'a travelling scientist', meaning a student of the science of history or a historiographer:

> […] what if, as a travelling scientist,
> I should study past ages and time's voracity?
> Ay, sure enough; *that* is the thing for me!
> Legends I read e'en in childhood's days,
> and since then I've kept up that branch of learning.—
> I will follow the path of the human race!
> Like a feather I'll float on the stream of history,
> make it all live again, as in a dream,—
> see the heroes battling for truth and right;
> as an onlooker only, in safety ensconced,—
> see thinkers perish and martyrs bleed,
> see empires founded and vanish away,—
> see world-epochs grow from their trifling seeds;
> in short, I will skim off the cream of history.—[52]

Archer's translation reads as a deliberate foreshadowing of Julian in *Emperor and Galilean*. Indeed, Hill's claim that 'for Gynt, the very monotony and monomania [of the world] can in themselves be highly varied' could apply equally, as we shall see, to Julian. Archer's translation also suggests the importance of Ibsen's connection between cosmopolitanism and the idea of history, between world citizenry and historical consciousness.

Archer's 'voracity', furthermore, with its homonym 'veracity', suggests Ibsen's Shakespearean idea of devouring time and, more generally, the epistemological claims of history to preserve the truth. Time inexorably swallows up events, but how can those events be truthfully preserved? Hamlet, who like Peer Gynt possesses what Hill identifies as an ability to detect variety in monotony and transform himself at will from a troubled soul into an assertive prince, observed, 'The play's the thing, / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King'.[53] For Ibsen, history is the thing that will catch the conscience of the cosmopolite (Gynt). Ibsen's Gynt understands that world citizenship depends upon a sense of the past (a sense of time) derived from travel, not merely from travel itself as a primarily spatial

[52] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 176.
[53] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III.i.606-607, in *The Complete Works*, 697.

phenomenon. His pragmatic cosmopolitanism, lacking the idealism that Eberkopf mistakenly attributes to it, nevertheless finds a vein of idealism in the study of history, which amounts to 'follow[ing] the path of the human race'. History and historical consciousness are not substitutes for cosmopolitanism, then, but augmentations of it. Ibsen sees historiography as a natural corollary of a geographical cosmopolitanism, and Archer finds historical consciousness to be an important, perhaps the most important, aspect of 'cosmopolitanisation'.

Even more Hamlet-like – and Diogenes-like, in its cynical distrust of the present and presentism and in its theatrical misogyny – is Gynt's peroration: 'The present is not worth so much as a shoe-sole; all faithless and marrowless are the doings of men; their soul has no wings and their deeds no weight; […] and women,—ah! they are a worthless crew.'[54] The comparison with Hamlet's 'And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me,—no, nor woman neither',[55] the speech of a Danish prince extrapolating the universal from the particular, is unavoidable. If Gynt's speech makes him seem an anti-idealist *par excellence*, it might also seem to do away with his cosmopolitanism, given the general misanthropy of his speech. But identification with humankind as creatures is not the same thing as identification with humankind as citizens. Although Hamlet's misanthropic apathy disappears when he exclaims, 'This is I, Hamlet the Dane!'[56] – thus reclaiming his nationality and patriotism – it is voiced in an obscure graveyard far from Elsinore, which has become intolerable. The same energy that motivates Hamlet to leave Denmark, a desire to escape the essential claustrophobia of his surroundings, motivates Gynt to 'start on my wanderings […] become an Egyptian, but an Egyptian on the basis of the Gyntian I', '[t]o Assyria […] bend my steps', 'go round the bend of the Red Sea by land', 'turn Asiatic', and finally go 'to the ramparts of Troy' and 'across to the glorious ancient Athens'.[57] Hamlet is a Dane on the basis of the Hamletian I, not on the basis of his birth (he cannot accept the royal Danish identity thrust on him, and needs to work it out independently in his own time); Ibsen's understanding of this, applied to Gynt, means that Gynt eventually returns to Norway with a greatly expanded sense of himself, just as Hamlet returns to Denmark with a renewed purpose.

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[54] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 177.
[55] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, II.ii.309-311, in *The Complete Works*, 694-695. Geoffrey Hill's translation of Ibsen's *Brand* (1866) includes the chorus-refrain, 'God is God and man can never / Be like Him. You thing of dust, / Defy him; ne His abject lover; / Either way your soul is lost!' (Ibsen, *Peer Gynt and Brand* [Hill], 157).
[56] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, V.i.253-254, in *The Complete Works*, 712.
[57] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 179.

Although Gynt as historian-*manqué* reflects that '[t]o begin right back at the world's creation / would lead to naught but bewilderment' and intends to 'go round about [i.e. avoid] all the Bible history' in Syria,[58] in Greece he plans to 'survey the pass that Leonidas guarded' and 'get up the works of the better philosophers, / find the prison where Socrates suffered, a martyr'.[59] However, he remembers he cannot travel to Greece, since 'there's a war there at present': having shed his earlier mercenary wish to fight on the Turkish side, but lacking the will to fight for the Greeks, he concludes, 'my Hellenism must even stand over.'[60] Gynt thus senses that human history apprehended through travel in many lands is an antidote to the sterility of purely pragmatic cosmopolitanism, even if as an objective correlative of idealist cosmopolitanism it is dubious, undermined by the historical inconveniences of the present. Idealist Hellenism, like mercenary pragmatism, is not enough.

If there is a tension between idealism and pragmatism in *Peer Gynt*, a dynamic that drives the play's actions and Gynt's reflections, the idea of history, with its perpetual claims to reveal a wider understanding of humanity as well as the peculiarities of past cultures, sustains that dynamic. When Gynt returns to his woodsman's hut in Norway as an old man (Act V, Scene 5), he reveals that 'one should try all things, and choose the best'; therefore '[I] had, after all, to go through Bible history'.[61] History, whether biblical or secular, becomes a touchstone for Gynt's cosmopolitanism: having encountered pragmatic and idealist manifestations of cosmopolitanism, history, which exists both in the visible landscape and in the contemplative mind, becomes for Gynt as close as anything to a happy medium between the two. A sophisticated, dilettantish cosmopolitanism eventually becomes for Gynt solid, earthbound, and provincial; the idea of history is the engine of this transition, for which a wild onion, with its many layers, becomes an extended comic metaphor.

Gynt soliloquizes, stripping off layers of his own identity like layers of the onion. In the process, however, he acknowledges their collective, cumulative power to define him in his complexity:

> There lies the outermost layer, all torn;
> that's the shipwrecked man on the jolly-boat's keel.
> Here's the passenger layer, scanty and thin;—
> and yet in its taste there's a tang of Peer Gynt.

[58] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 179.
[59] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 179.
[60] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 179.
[61] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 235.

> Next underneath is the gold-digger ego;
> the juice is all gone—if ever it had any.
> This coarse-grained layer with the hardened skin
> is the peltry-hunter by Hudson's Bay.
> The next one looks like a crown;—oh, thanks!
> we'll throw it away without more ado.
> Here's the archaeologist, strong but sturdy;
> and here is the Prophet, juicy and fresh.
> He stinks, as the Scripture has it, of lies,
> enough to bring the water to an honest man's eyes.
> This layer that rolls itself softly together
> is the gentleman, living in ease and good cheer.[62]

Gynt is 'a liar', as Janet Garton points out, '[…] but by the same token he is also a poet'.[63] More than this, however, his appetite for history, both personal history and international history, is closer to a disinterested search for truth – an ongoing and endless task – than a finite search for validation of his own preconceived ideas. The 'shipwrecked man', the 'passenger', the 'gold-digger', the 'peltry-hunter', the 'archaeologist' and so on, are all manifestations of Gynt's cosmopolitanism, his shape-shifting self-dramatization which is at once a personal history and a roll-call of male archetypes culled from the annals of history.

In pursuing his study of history, and in shaping his historical consciousness, Gynt adapts his temporary garb and identity according to where he finds himself, but does so only on the basis of a wider spiritual self. Thus his nationality is almost arbitrary. In Egypt, at the ancient statue of Memnon, Gynt is idealistic in his concept of the self, but pragmatic in its immediate outward manifestations; the horizontal limitations of geography are overlaid by the vertical backward reach of history. To begin with biblical myth, however, would be futile except in its 'secular' archaeological value:

> Here I might fittingly start on my wanderings—
> So now, for a change, I've become an Egyptian;
> but Egyptian on the basis of the Gyntish I.
> To Assyria next I will bend my steps.
> To begin right back at the world's creation
> would lead to nought but bewilderment.
> I will go round about all the Bible history;
> its secular traces I'll always be coming on;

[62] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 236.
[63] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt and Brand* (Hill), xxv.

> and to look, as the saying goes, into its seams,
> lies entirely outside both my plan and my powers.
> Now I will rest me, and patiently wait
> till the statue [of Memnon] has sung its habitual dawn-song.
> When breakfast is over, I'll climb up the pyramid;
> if I've time, I'll look through its interior afterwards.
> Then I'll go round the head of the Red Sea by land;
> perhaps I may hit on King Pophitar's grave.—
> Next I'll turn Asiatic. In Babylon I'll seek for
> the far-renowned harlots and hanging gardens,—
> that's to say, the chief traces of civilisation.
> Then at one bound to the ramparts of Troy.
> From Troy there's a fareway by sea direct
> across to the glorious ancient Athens;—
> there on the spot will I, stone by stone,
> survey the pass that Leonidas guarded.
> I will get up the works of the better philosophers,
> find the prison where Socrates suffered, a martyr—;
> oh no, by-the-bye—there's a war there at present—!
> Well then, my Hellenism must even stand over.[64]

As this speech makes clear, Gynt's cosmopolitanisation, far from amounting to a fixed itinerary, depends upon an awakening of a historical consciousness that only war can temporarily endanger. Unlike Byron, whose Hellenism was brightened rather than dimmed by war in Greece, Gynt is sceptical about the 'historic' value of present-day wars and about ventures that too quickly and carelessly invoke the perceived glory of the past; at the same time, he favours the invocation of secular history over history's reduction to a narrow religious significance.

Gynt's cosmopolitan fluidity is reshaped in Ibsen's next drama, *Emperor and Galilean* (1873), written in the aftermath of the German victory in the Franco-Prussian War. The first part of this enormous work, 'Caesar's Apostasy', I now argue, dramatizes an idealist cosmopolitanism expressed on Julian's part, something that shapes Ibsen's understanding of world history and anticipates the cosmopolitan tone of the later, 'Norwegian' plays.

iv. 'Caesar's Apostasy': world history and idealist cosmopolitanism

[64] Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* (Archer), 179.

Ibsen's 'world-historic drama'[65] (in Archer's literal translation), *Emperor and Galilean*, was written in Rome from 1871 and published in 1873, but conceived as early as 1864 when Ibsen first travelled south of the Alps.[66] Split into two long parts, 'Caesar's Apostasy' (concerning Julian the Apostate before he became Emperor) and 'The Emperor Julian' (concerning Julian's rule), and long accepted as a closet drama, the play was first performed in German (at Leipzig) in 1896, and in Dano-Norwegian (at Oslo) in 1903.[67] It was not staged in English, however, until the London production (significantly abridged) of 2011.[68] Anticipating that its full significance, like that of Ibsen's other plays, will be realized only in performance, Toril Moi argues that '*Emperor and Galilean* is centrally concerned with the experience of modernity in Europe after 1870', and that it is 'self-consciously reflecting on its own theatrical tradition, in a tremendous effort to develop a new understanding of theater and theatricality.'[69] Nevertheless Moi adds that 'contemporary audiences […] read it in idealist terms'.[70] What this idealism consists of in *Emperor and Galilean*, however, is an idealist cosmopolitanism expressed on Julian's part, rather than any religious idealism. This idealist cosmopolitanism is something Ibsen – in the play's self-reflexive theatricality – implicitly questions, but something he also regards as an admirable 'life-illusion' or 'life-lie' (*livsløgnen*): a necessary ideal by which a person preserves his or her sanity in an imperfect and disappointing world.[71] Ibsen, I argue, moves in this play towards an anti-idealist, pragmatic cosmopolitanism even as he permits many of his characters, beginning with Julian, to retain an idealist cosmopolitanism in order to give their lives the fullest meaning.

'Ibsen', Moi notes, 'always considered *Emperor and Galilean* his *hovedverk* ("main" or "most important work).'[72] This fact places the play at the figurative as well as the literal centre of Ibsen's *oeuvre*. It also demonstrates the endurance of the association in Ibsen's

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[65] Henrik Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean*, edited and translated by William Archer (Henrik Ibsen's Prose Dramas, IV) (London: Walter Scott, 1890), viii. Archer defends Ibsen's Hegelian subtitle by stating that 'Julian the Apostate, unlike Inger Gyldenlöve and Earl Skule, belongs in every sense to world-history. The sources from which Ibsen has drawn his material are open to all' (viii).

[66] Archer claims, in terms which echo the contemporary American reception of Henry James as a disaffected and disloyal expatriate, that 'the mood of indignation in which the poet [Ibsen] turned his back on his native country imperatively demanded utterance' (Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), [vii]).

[67] Meyer, *Ibsen*, 781; Ibsen, *Correspondence of Henrik Ibsen*, 311.

[68] See Ben Power, 'Ibsen's *Emperor and Galilean*: a lost classic', *The Independent*, 3 June 2011. https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/features/ibsens-emperor-and-galilean-a-lost-classic-2292211.html (accessed June 22, 2020).

[69] Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 190.

[70] Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 190.

[71] An Ibsenian neologism famously used in *The Wild Duck* (Ibsen, *Ghosts, An Enemy of the People, The Wild Duck* [Archer], 361). Archer glosses: '"*Livslögnen*," literally, "the life-lie." The context sufficiently explains the difference between Relling's "life-illusion" and [Arthur] Schopenhauer's' (361).

[72] Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 188.

mind between cosmopolitanism as an idealist position – to which Julian frequently alludes in his references to the philosophy and lifestyle of Diogenes the Cynic – and as a 'world-historic' force. Such a force has antecedents in the Roman world and contemporary resonances in a Europe shaken by the 1870 Franco-Prussian war and, in time, altered by the rise of liberal democracy. *Emperor and Galilean* is distinctly cosmopolitan in setting: the action moves from Constantinople to Athens, Ephesus, Lutetia (present-day Paris), Vienne, Constantinople again, Antioch, and the Empire's eastern frontier.

Ibsen dramatizes cosmopolitanism, firstly, in his depiction of the cosmopolitan Roman Empire in its outward manifestation, an empire politically devolved and shakily held together. But he also depicts it from within: the reflections of Julian, which veer between dialogue and interior monologue, show cosmopolitanism idealized. The emperor's imperial destiny – of which the reader of the drama is made instantly aware – is complicated by his obsession with the pagan Roman and classical Greek past, particularly with the utopian idealism of three philosophers of the fifth century before Christ, contemporaries and intellectual rivals: Plato, Antisthenes, and Diogenes the Cynic. Plato's ideal republic, and Diogenes' cynical rejection of Athens in favour of an identification with world citizenship, are two models of government with which Julian grapples intellectually, and later, as Emperor, practically. Diogenes, in rejecting the city, provincializes (and, one might say, rusticates) cosmopolitanism from the outset. Similarly, Julian, in rejecting the rise of Christianity and making war against the Goths and Persians, inadvertently provincializes the Roman Empire even as he preaches world government and religious toleration.

Ibsen's awareness of these historical contradictions will inform his later prose plays beginning with *The Pillars of Society*. Written just before the more famous sociological plays, *Emperor and Galilean* therefore informs the 'Norwegian' plays' anti-idealist, 'provincial' cosmopolitanism. Moi claims that '*Ibsen moves away from idealism by representing it* [her emphasis] […] This is brilliant, for to represent idealism is to grasp it in its finitude, to bring it down to earth.'[73] But of what does this represented idealism consist, specifically? The answer, half-obscured by the religious themes, I see to be idealist cosmopolitanism, which Julian derives, as though by imperial as well as intellectual inheritance, from Diogenes (Julian distances himself from his predecessors' claims to be Galileans and therefore ethnically related to Jesus Christ). The word 'cosmopolitan' is not used in the play, nor is 'citizen of the world' a formula that either Julian or any of his

[73] Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 216.

courtiers utters. But they do not need to: Diogenes is shorthand for cosmopolitanism as well as cynicism. Julian's court is an intellectual milieu, assuming its courtiers' prior knowledge, and it is part of Ibsen's self-consciously theatrical method that the audience becomes a participant in the imperial throngs, but unsure whether to be Galileans (Christians) or pagan revivalists, religious fanatics or political cosmopolites.

While engaging in sophistry in Athens, Julian declares half-facetiously to the scholars, 'I am a Greek citizen. How much does a Greek citizen owe the Emperor?'[74] He later refers to 'us Greeks'.[75] Like Peer Gynt's 'Hellenism', Julian's 'Greek' is evidently shorthand for a lover of the Greek philosophical tradition, rather than a statement of national allegiance. The young Julian, cousin of the Christian Emperor Constantius II, is not at home at the Emperor's court at Constantinople (named after the Emperor's father, Constantine the Great, the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity). Even while nominally Christian, Julian resembles Diogenes in his cynical desire to escape the *polis*, to live frugally, and to identify with the wider *cosmos*. Like Hedda Gabler, who is so struck by the yellow autumn leaves, Julian is first presented as a sensitive aesthete who longs for an alternative life:

> JULIAN (grasps his hands and kisses them): The Emperor's hands are white and cool.
>
> THE EMPEROR. What else should they be? What was in your mind? There, I caught you again!
>
> JULIAN (kisses them again). They are like rose-leaves in the moonlight night.
>
> THE EMPEROR. Yes yes [*sic*], Julian![76]

The Emperor Constantius then indulges in a hypochondriacal outburst, and his rapturous fear of holy communion is calmed by his wife, the Empress Eusebia.

At this point, Julian makes his dissatisfaction with his life at court, and his desire to escape its political sterility, clear:

> JULIAN. Sire, have pity, and send me far from here.
>
> THE EMPEROR. Where would you go?
>
> JULIAN. To Egypt. I would fain go to Egypt, if you think fit. So many go thither – into the great desert.
>
> THE EMPEROR. Into the great desert? Ha! In the desert one broods. I forbid you to brood.

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[74] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 43.
[75] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 175.
[76] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 8.

> JULIAN: I will not brood, if only you will let me.—Here my anguish of soul increases day by day. Evil thoughts flock around me. For nine days I have worn a hair shirt, and it has not protected me; for nine nights I have lashed myself with thongs, but scourging does not banish them.[77]

Ostensibly a practitioner of Christian asceticism, Julian resembles Diogenes in his garb and in his rejection of the city that has nourished his very idea of the *polis* as the political centre, self-interested and religiously dogmatic (Constantinople had replaced Rome as the imperial capital in 330).

Although Diogenes was not an advocate of sexual repression or regulation, Julian's '[e]vil thoughts' can be inferred to be sexual ones, and Constantius puritanically forbids him to 'enter the church with those evil thoughts in your mind.'[78] But another such 'evil thought', in the emperor's eyes, is Julian's expressed desire to leave, to escape, to wander the Egyptian desert where 'one broods' even more. His 'evil thoughts' must also include the scepticism he later voices openly: like Diogenes, when asked questions by strangers, Julian replies in surprising ways. An anonymous blind man, asking him, 'Who are you, that mock at a blind brother?', receives the cynical reply from Julian, 'A brother in unbelief and blindness.'[79] This kind of caustic wit is characteristic of Diogenes, as when he 'say[s] that it is not only the deaf and blind who are impaired (*anaperous*), but those who have no knapsack (*pera*)'.[80] Blindness can be metaphysical, therefore, and Julian takes this understanding from Diogenes. Although Diogenes' famous assertion of his own cosmopolitanism – "I'm a citizen of the world"[81] – is only one quotation wedged amongst many collected by his namesake Diogenes Laertius on a range of subjects,[82] its centrality to Diogenes' philosophy is obvious, since it accounts for the eccentrically peripatetic lifestyle which is the chief source of others' fascination in him in the first place.

When Julian meets Libanius, his tutor in philosophy, at Athens (Act II), he mocks Libanius' scornful attitude towards hedonistic materialism. Libanius tells his followers 'how ill it becomes a lover of wisdom, and how little it profits him, to run after things other than the

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[77] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 8-9.
[78] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 9.
[79] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 10.
[80] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 275. According to the editor, 'A knapsack was […] part of the characteristically spare gear of a Cynic' (275).
[81] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 288.
[82] It is found between his cynical answers to the accusation that 'he carried gold in his cloak', and his equally cynical response to parents who 'were sacrificing in the hope that a son might be born to them' (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 288).

truth.'[83] Julian then responds half-facetiously, 'Oh, my Libanius, when I listen to you I seem lapped in the sweet dream that Diogenes has once more arisen in our midst.'[84] When Julian reveals that the sons of the provincial governor, Milo, are in need of a teacher, arousing Libanius' mercenary interest, he says sarcastically to Libanius, 'the new Diogenes who gets them to educate will scarcely need to drink out of the hollow of his hand for poverty.'[85] Libanius, Julian concludes, 'cares only for his own interest. […] Libanius is not a great man.'[86] It is no coincidence that Diogenes is said to have 'condemned those who, while praising just men for being unaffected by wealth, envied the rich.'[87] Although Julian's first references to Diogenes, directed at Libanius, are therefore mocking and ironic, his underlying preoccupation with the cosmopolitan implications of Diogenes' teaching is reinforced – as in Ibsen's later plays, not least *The Pillars of Society* – by the references in this scene and others to ships and cities, comings and goings, as though the point of the Roman Empire, in Julian's eyes, is to permit and justify his own rootlessness. Moi explains that '[t]he restless and disenchanted Julian has seen through his philosophy teacher Libanius' at this point.[88] But Julian himself, just as much as the Libanius he mocks, resembles a 'new Diogenes' in that same cosmopolitan restlessness and cynical disenchantment.

The religiously cosmopolitan notion of 'Christendom' – the universal church of people united by their consciousness of Christ as saviour – is one that Julian, in his early conversations with Basilius and Gregory (both to be canonized by the Church), finds both confusing and distasteful. At this point (Act II), Julian's view of the world is one in which philosophical integrity comes before organized religious participation. His disenchantment is intensified when he asks Basilius, rhetorically, where Christendom is to be found. This speech reveals much about Julian's incipient cosmopolitanism:

> What sense is there in these voices calling to me from east and west, that I must save Christendom? Where is it to be found, this Christendom that I am to save? With the Emperor or with Cæsar [Gallus, the emperor's chosen heir]? […] Ask Makrina [Basilius' pious sister] if Christendom is to be sought in the wilderness,—on the pillars where the stylite-saints stand on one leg? Or is it in the cities? Perhaps among those bakers in Constantinople who lately took to their fists to decide the question whether the Trinity consists of three individuals or three hypostases!—Which of these would Christ recognise if he

[83] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 47.
[84] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 47.
[85] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 47.
[86] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 50.
[87] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 273.
[88] Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 325.

> came down to earth again?—Out with your Diogenes-lantern, Basilius! Enlighten this pitchy darkness.—Where is Christendom?[89]

One implication of this speech is that 'Christendom' is to be found everywhere and nowhere. Another is that the true light of Christianity rests on its claims to universality rather than on its division of people into Christian and heathen, saved and damned. Having earlier mocked Libanius as a new Diogenes, Julian now likens Basilius to the same philosopher. 'Diogenes-lantern' refers to the anecdote that Diogenes, '[o]n lighting a lamp in broad daylight, […] walked about saying, "I am looking for a man."'[90] The implication is that Diogenes could not find a truly honest man in broad daylight. Basilius, in other words, is too concerned with looking for others' virtue and too little concerned with enlightening Julian about the whereabouts of Christendom itself. Yet Julian now finds the aesthetic pagan view of the world as unsatisfying as the Christian claim to truth. As he puts it, '[t]he old beauty is no longer beautiful, and the new truth is no longer true.'[91] Neither is enlightening in either an aesthetic or a philosophical sense.

It was on being asked where he was from, not where he lived, that Diogenes gave his famous reply, 'I am a citizen of the world', and Julian, in asking where Christendom is to be found, rather than where it presently holds sway, allows for the possibility that it might instead be transfigured into a universal sense of the mystical or transcendental, whatever theological creed is authorized.[92] When Libanius tells Julian that the celebrated philosopher Maximus 'has declared that he can command spirits and shades of the dead',[93] Julian, to Libanius' horror, takes this as a good sign, saying 'you have shown me that man I have been in search of.'[94] Julian thus begins to return to the paganism of his imperial predecessors. It is a paganism, however, that is both historicist, taking account of the importance of the past ('spirits and shades of the dead'), and cosmopolitan, disregarding the whereabouts of this new mystical school 'where torches are lighted and where statues smile'[95] in favour of its universal application.

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[89] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 59-60.
[90] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 279.
[91] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 61.
[92] The historical Basilius defended the Nicene Creed and was later canonized.
[93] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 63.
[94] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 65.
[95] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 64.

Julian's major realization under Maximus' influence – 'That which is, is not; and that which is not, is'[96] – is not a turning away from earthly reality, but an understanding that 'the empire of the spirit shall be founded' on earth.[97] Archer's prefatory note emphasizes that '[t]he Norwegians use only one word—(*Riget*, German *das Reich*)—to cover the two ideas represented in English by "empire" and "kingdom."'[98] Julian's hope for 'the empire of the spirit' need not, therefore, correspond to the Roman Empire. Julian's idea of the 'third street, towards Eleusis and further',[99] and Maximus' more explicit concept of the 'third' empire, 'the empire of the great mystery',[100] denotes a synthesis of the old classical learning and the new Christian piety. Julian at first rejects Maximus' more pragmatic vision of a third empire ('No; a thousand times no!'[101]), preferring freedom to necessity ('I defy necessity! I will not serve it! I am free, free, free!'[102]), and choosing Princess Helena, Constantius' young sister, to be his wife ('in spite', Maximus warns him, 'of sign against sign'[103]). Later, Julian's overthrow of Constantius happens offstage, in the Greek tragic tradition of relegating the physically violent to the obscene; but Ibsen is also expressing a preference for the theatre of psychology and symbolism, and for *tableau-vivant* spectacle over melodramatic action.

Act V takes place in the catacombs at Vienne, where Julian hides. This hideaway, 'feebly lighted by a hanging-lamp' in Ibsen's stage direction,[104] symbolizes Julian's indomitable idealism amidst the darkness of military and political intrigue. The lamp also refers back to the 'Diogenes-lantern' he projected onto Basilius's searching the world for universal truth. It is only 'by the light and might of Helios',[105] the Greek sun-deity – Ibsen's mystical fixation with the sun as symbolic of the better life begins here – that Julian can see the truth of his prospects, his future as Emperor. Diogenes famously requested Alexander the Great, who offered him 'whatever you desire', to '[s]tand out of my light'.[106] Ibsen takes this image one step further, rendering light as symbolic of the well-lived life that Julian equates with his destiny to unite pagan and Christian in a cosmopolitan empire, taking 'the reins of the world-

[96] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 71.
[97] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 75.
[98] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), x.
[99] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 76.
[100] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 81.
[101] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 86.
[102] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 86.
[103] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 92.
[104] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 133.
[105] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 138.
[106] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 278.

chariot'[107] from Constantius, going '[u]p into the daylight!'[108] and towards his imperial, world-historical destiny.

Halvard Solness is another Ibsenian hero whose journey upwards or vertically symbolizes the pitfalls both of personal ambition and of idealist cosmopolitanism. In *The Master Builder* (1892), the tower that Solness builds is at once a vantage point for Solness himself – and therefore a monument to his own vaunting ambition – and (like Peer Gynt's imaginary kingdom) a Tower of Babel, symbolic of the idealism of cosmopolitanism confounded by irreconcilable differences of culture and language. Hilda Wangel, a young woman who remembers meeting Solness when she was a child and he an adult, hints at this predicament when she confides to Solness (in Archer's translation), 'I thought, if you could build the highest church-towers in the world, you could surely manage to raise a kingdom of one sort or another as well.'[109] Solness replies, 'I can't quite make you out, Miss Wangel.'[110]

Solness and Hilda speak at cross purposes throughout *The Master Builder*, as though ever since their earlier meeting when Hilda was only thirteen – at which Solness had promised to build the tower – they had been supernaturally scattered and made to speak different languages, just like the biblical Babel-builders. Archer's preface notes that 'the retrospect with which we are here [in *The Master Builder*] concerned is purely psychological.'[111] In 'Caesar's Apostasy', Julian similarly speaks at cross purposes with Libanius, Basilius, and even Maximus (whose philosophy he comes to take the most seriously), as though retrospect has rendered them psychologically incompatible. It is Julian's task to reconcile these misunderstandings, both in his own life, and in his role as Emperor. He wants to rebuild the Tower of Babel, in effect, while retaining the differences in language and culture that were caused by the scattering of its original builders. 'The Emperor Julian' – the second part of *Emperor and Galilean*, to which I now turn – shows how delusions of grandeur, in the form of a cosmopolitan idealism that reaches beyond the monotonous variety of the cosmopolitan world presented, can detrimentally affect even the most powerful man in the world.

v. 'The Emperor Julian'*:* idealist cosmopolitanism deconstructed

[107] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 150.
[108] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 154.
[109] Henrik Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler, The Master Builder*, [edited and translated] with introduction by William Archer (The Collected Works of Henrik Ibsen, X) (London: William Heinemann, 1907), 247.
[110] Ibsen, *Hedda, Master Builder* (Archer), 247.
[111] Ibsen, *Hedda, Master Builder* (Archer), xxvii.

At the beginning of *Caesar's Apostasy*, it is made clear that Constantius as emperor is zealously anti-Christian and thus anti-cosmopolitan. He is quoted by Phocion the Dyer, an ordinary citizen of Constantinople, as having 'lately expressed his displeasure at the way in which we Christian citizens hold intercourse with the heathen, just as if no gulf divided us'.[112] Phocion's conception of citizenship – 'we Christian citizens', and citizens of Constantinople by implication – accords with Constantius' zealotry. At the beginning of 'The Emperor Julian', by contrast, Julian, although he is now pagan, encourages religious toleration. Although Julian himself is now openly pagan and is hailed by 'Heathen Citizens' at Constantinople on his first appearance as Emperor, he tells the Christian priests, 'Let not your pious hymns be silent on my account. […] Follow whoso will, and remain whoso will. But this you all shall know to-day, that my place is here.'[113] Urged to explain, he concludes with a convoluted autobiographical account of his new policy of religious toleration:

> I mean by this, that there shall be perfect freedom for all citizens. Cling to the Christians' God, you who find it [to] conduce to your souls' repose. As for me, I dare not build my hopes on a god who has hitherto been a foe to me in all my undertakings. I know by infallible signs and tokens that the victories I won on the Gallic frontier I owe to those divinities who favoured Alexander in a somewhat similar way. Under the watch and ward of those divinities I passed unscathed through all dangers; and, in especial, it was they who furthered my journey hither with such marvellous speed and success that, as I gathered from cries in the streets, the people have come to look upon me as a divine being,—which is a great exaggeration, my friends! But certain it is, that I dare not show myself ungrateful for such continuous proofs of favour. […] Therefore, I restore the venerable Gods of our forefathers to their pristine rights. But no injury shall be done to the God of the Galileans, nor to the God of the Jews. [114]

Julian's religious toleration is connected to his conception of the cosmopolitan Roman Empire, but it is only with the safety net of historical precedent – 'Alexander'; 'our forefathers' – that he feels emboldened to put it into practice in his own day.

With this political framework, citizenship is equally the people's and Julian's own:

> But the freedom I concede to the meanest citizen, I claim for myself as well. Be it known, therefore, to you all, Greeks and Romans, that I revert with my whole heart to the beliefs and rites which our forefathers held sacred,—that they may be freely propagated and exercised, no less than all new and

[112] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 4.
[113] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 164.
[114] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 165.

> foreign opinions;—and as I am a son of the metropolis, and therefore hold it pre-eminently dear, this I proclaim in the name of the divinities who protect this city.[115]

As Edward Gibbon wrote, Julian 'extended to all inhabitants of the Roman world, the benefits of free and equal toleration'.[116] But as Ibsen makes clear, *polis* is 'pre-eminent' in the wider *cosmos*. Julian's allegiance to Constantinople is as important as his allegiance to the empire; he is 'a son of the metropolis' even as his expressed desire to wander the Egyptian desert showed his earlier contempt for the city when young.

Power inevitably corrupts Julian, and his professed tolerance is limited in practice. It transpires that his idealist cosmopolitanism does not encompass those who openly disagree with him, and he makes it his mission to 'root out error' in spite of a concurrent wish that '[m]y court shall be open to all men of mark, whatever their opinions.'[117] Moi identifies Julian's statement, 'Let's show the world the unusual and sublime spectacle of a court free of hypocrisy' (her own translation) as 'a peculiar claim', which because of the choice of words in the Dano-Norwegian 'makes it clear that it is still theater' and 'undermines itself as it is being uttered' (all proclamations being theatrical and therefore, in Julian's 'anti-theatricalist' view, deceitful).[118] Julian's theatricality, occurring in spite of his anti-theatrical prejudice, is made more theatrical not just by his consciousness of 'spectacle', however, but also by the implied audience: 'all the world' becomes comically reduced, in this sense, to the watching audience, or indeed the solitary reader. Ibsen's understanding of theatre is in this sense cosmopolitan: the audience member or reader must come to see him/herself as the agent through which the action of the play becomes extrapolated into a larger vision of humanity. Ibsen's modernist metatheatre thus relies on a provisional, open-ended cosmopolitanism in which the audience fully, however unwittingly, participates.

Another historical precedent Julian cites as a model is Marcus Aurelius, who becomes an example of how to show *unspectacular* spectacle to the audience:

> I make him my pattern, rather than the Emperor whose death we have lately had to mourn. No more parade of transitory worldly splendour. Even the barbarians shall see that wisdom—in the person, truly, of her meanest servant—has resumed her place upon the throne.[119]

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[115] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 167.
[116] Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: Abridged Edition*, edited and abridged by David Womersley (London: Penguin, 2000), 243.
[117] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 170-171.
[118] Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 209. Archer's translation uses the more Roman 'rare and august' for 'unusual and sublime' (Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* [Archer], 171).
[119] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 172.

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, the Stoic philosopher-emperor, was also a cosmopolitan on the pattern of Diogenes, reflecting in his *Meditations*, 'As Antoninus, my city and country is Rome: as a human being, it is the world. So what benefits these two cities is my only good.'[120] This is Julian's creed at the beginning of his reign, and his concern with the display of austerity and toleration is simply a practical manifestation of this philosophy, which began with Diogenes' cynicism but gained political authority with the pragmatic success of Marcus Aurelius.

Ibsen makes it clear that spectacle can still be effective where it is unspectacular: cosmopolitanism can be modestly stoical as well as flamboyantly cynical. In both cases, however, the *show* of wisdom is as important as the wisdom itself. In denying this, Julian protests too much. Having dismissed his barber, Julian receives eastern envoys with his hair uncut, declaring: 'Better so; for although I know well that it is not the unkempt hair, nor the tattered cloak, that makes the true philosopher, yet I think the example given by both Antisthenes and Diogenes may well be respected by one who – even on the throne – desires to follow in such great teachers' footsteps.'[121] Julian is alone on stage when making this speech: the soliloquizing reflects his concern with audience, and Ibsen's metatheatre in having Julian soliloquize makes the theatricality of the scene all the more evident.

None of Julian's models of wisdom, conquest, and good government – Alexander the Great, Diogenes, Antisthenes, Plato, Marcus Aurelius – had to contend with the rise of Christianity, and Ibsen's dramatic irony, writing for an audience who could not have failed to foresee the eventual turn of historical events, is his most obvious piece of metatheatre. This is related to his deconstruction of cosmopolitanism. Julian is a citizen of the world only as long as the world does not interfere with his grand design: thus he tells the envoys to 'inform your masters that it is my intention to maintain friendship with all nations who do not – whether by force or craft – stand in the way of my designs.'[122] In the original, '*folkeslag*'[123] translates more literally as 'peoples', ambiguously suggesting both individuals and societies; and since societies can only be represented by envoys and rulers, nations become reducible to individuals from Julian's point of view. Just as Ibsen's later plays contributed to the longstanding perception of Norwegians in general as 'a dark and brooding and unhappy

[120] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, translated with notes by Martin Hammond, with an introduction by Diskin Clay (London: Penguin, 2006), 55.
[121] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 173-174.
[122] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 175.
[123] Henrik Ibsen, *Henrik Ibsens Skrifte*. https://www.ibsen.uio.no/forside.xhtml. vi.507.

people',[124] so to Julian the envoys he meets and rumours he hears, such as 'the strange idea of the Indians, that Alexander has returned to earth',[125] are the manifestations of whole nations.

Unlike Peer Gynt, who despite his despair and the surrealism of *Gynt*'s final scene, stays sane, Julian eventually goes mad. Himself dishevelled and unkempt, he berates his courtiers' slovenliness, comparing them (in Act III) to world-renouncing Christian 'penitents', and wondering if they are followers of Diogenes, who by now becomes a model of superficiality rather than wisdom:

> Oh, my dear friends, what can this lead to? Are you lovers of wisdom? Are you followers of Diogenes, whose garb and habits you ape? In truth you do not haunt the schools nearly as much as you besiege my treasurer. What a pitiful and despicable thing has not wisdom become because of you! Oh, hypocrites and babblers without understanding![126]

Julian, as the audience well knows, is talking of himself as much as his courtiers. This apparently off-the-cuff mention of Diogenes begins Julian's transmutation of Diogenes' example from a clear-headed, even-handed and non-partisan cosmopolitan philosophy into something superficial, grotesque, and corruptible. Idealism in the play is not Christianity or paganism, but cosmopolitanism: Julian is a citizen of the world debased by his own and others' hypocrisy, confusing appearance and reality, wisdom and wealth.

In Act IV, reacquainted with his old teacher Libanius (whom he earlier compared to Diogenes), Julian cites Diogenes as a philosophical example he ought to follow. Now, however, Julian puts himself on the same level as a model of wisdom put into practice:

> Why do so few tread in my footsteps? Why stop at Socrates? Why not go a few steps further, and follow Diogenes—or, if I dare say so—me, since we lead you to happiness? For is not happiness the object of all philosophy? And what is happiness but harmony with one's self?[127]

Soon after this, fed up with his courtiers' refusal to appear like Diogenes, Julian once more projects his own predicament onto them, addressing Diogenes himself: 'Oh Diogenes,—how degenerate are your successors! They are ashamed to wear your cloak in the open street.'[128]

Julian's final mention of Diogenes (in Act V) shows his admiration for Christian fanaticism, which he feels should be applied to the pagan philosophers. Diogenes becomes more deity than a dispenser of wisdom:

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[124] Robert Ferguson, *Henrik Ibsen: A New Biography* (London: Richard Cohen Books, 1996), x.
[125] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 176.
[126] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 239.
[127] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 247.
[128] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 249.

> These Galileans, you must know, have something in their hearts which I should greatly desire you should cultivate. You call yourselves followers of Socrates, of Plato, of Diogenes. But is there one of you who would face death with ecstasy for Plato's sake? Would our Priscus sacrifice his left hand for Socrates? Would Kytron let his ears be cut off for the sake of Diogenes? No, truly! I know you, ye whited sepulchres![129]

This is the first instance, in Ibsen's work, of the biblical 'whited sepulchres' *leitmotif*, which recurs, as we shall see, in the later plays. Like Rörlund or Stockmann, Julian idealizes being true to one's creed, even as he fails to do so himself.

What is the creed that Julian finds his courtiers to fall short of practising? If the fictionalized Julian is not Ibsen, nevertheless his yearning for wholeness, combining the best of the past and the present in order to make an integrated future, is a feature of his creator. What is such an attitude called, if not cosmopolitanism? Archer, seeing his role as translator rather than critic, deliberately limited himself in his prefatory note to the biographical-critical observation that 'in the [Franco-Prussian] war of 1870 [Ibsen] saw an epoch-making event' that inspired the play.[130] Edmund Gosse, after Ibsen's death, reflected that '*Emperor and Galilean* preserves a colour of idealism and even of mysticism which was for many years to be absent from Ibsen's writings, but to reappear in his old age with *The Master-builder*.'[131] These concise observations were to form the basis of further criticism.

More recent biographers have built on these early hints. Michael Meyer claims that '[t]o find a religion which would combine Christian ethics with the joy of life [*livsglæde*] […] is the central theme of *Emperor and Galilean*.'[132] Robert Ferguson cites a letter in which Ibsen admitted that prior to the Franco-Prussian war, 'my view of the world and history and human life had always been a nationalist view. Now it developed to become tribal'.[133] Ferguson claims that Ibsen in this letter and others 'was hinting strongly that Germany [victorious in the war] was the promised land in which the "third kingdom" prophesied by Maximos […] would arise', and that Ibsen's new 'tribal' view was pan-Germanism (about which Ibsen could also be mocking).[134] Figueiredo claims that 'Ibsen would never commit himself to one kingdom [pagan] or the other [Christian]; his concern would always be in the dynamic

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[129] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 325.
[130] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), vii.
[131] Edmund Gosse, 'Ibsen, Henrik', in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica: Eleventh Edition* (1910-11), Volume 14, <https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911_Encyclopædia_Britannica/Ibsen,_Henrik> (accessed 28 April 2020).
[132] Meyer, *Ibsen*, 400.
[133] Ferguson, *Henrik Ibsen*, 180.
[134] Ferguson, *Henrik Ibsen*, 180.

between the two. And it is in this dynamic that the power of the play lies, not in the vague utopia of some impending kingdom.'[135]

Cosmopolitanism, however, partly because of its parodic foregrounding in *Peer Gynt* and its association with the 'vague utopia' of the mysterious 'third kingdom' in *Emperor and Galilean*, has been notably absent from Anglophone discussions of the later play ever since Gosse's and Archer's time. Cosmopolitanism is better seen in *Emperor and Galilean* not in utopian but in dynamic terms, as part of the 'world-historic' struggle between pagan and Christian that Julian, in spite of his unique position, cannot see in full perspective. Diogenes, with his famous outward appearance and proffered nuggets of inner wisdom, was the original cosmopolite. But in *Emperor and Galilean* he is also a symbolic bridge – or rather, drawbridge, since he is not ultimately the most popular sage – between the two conflicting kingdoms of paganism (materialist, fleshly, worldly, cynical) and Christianity (spiritualist, ascetic, other-worldly, reverential). If, historically, the struggle between the two forces inevitably ended in the triumph of the latter, for Ibsen Diogenes is a cosmopolitan in his assimilation – long before Christianity – of the habits of Christian ascetics within resolute, cynical pagan materialism. Like the Christian penitents, Diogenes was apparently unconcerned with material wealth or outward appearance; but like the pagans, he was sceptical of everything that is non-corporeal and of claims to moral law based on supernatural revelation. Ibsen's Julian, the latter-day Diogenes, combines a Christian asceticism with a reverence for the pagan gods. Cosmopolitanism is a subtle but unreliable intermediary between these conflicting states of mind and being. The material world in the play becomes a giant amphitheatre, an arena of bloody battles, persecutions, and in the end the site of Julian's dead ideas as well as his dead body.

To Maximus, 'among the ruins of the temple of Apollo' outside Antioch (Act III), Julian asks, 'Is not the whole earth a rubbish-heap?'[136] To be a citizen of the world, Ibsen implies, is to inhabit a world that is inevitably conflicted and agonized, not least about the claims of the hereafter. But Julian cannot accept such a desecrated world. He explains his personal dilemma to Maximus:

> Emperor and Galilean! How reconcile that contradiction? Yes, this Jesus Christ was the greatest rebel who ever lived. What was Brutus—what was Cassius, compared with him? They murdered only the man Julius Cæsar; but he murders all that is called Cæsar or Augustus. Is peace conceivable between

[135] Figueiredo, *Henrik Ibsen*, 342.
[136] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 270.

> the Galilean and the Emperor? Is there room for them both upon the earth? For he lives on the earth, Maximus,—the Galilean lives, I say, however thoroughly both Jews and Romans imagined that they had killed him;—he lives in the rebellious minds of men; he lives in their scorn and defiance of all visible authority.[137]

Christ is thus the obstacle to 'peace' between 'Galilean' and 'Emperor'. But Diogenes is the play's other named rebel and a common thread between Christian and pagan, living on, like Christ, in the minds of cynics, cosmopolites, and those who defy 'visible authority' wherever that authority is narrowly nationalistic. Diogenes is not, of course, the answer in practice. As Ibsen knows, he could never have had Christ's popular appeal. He is merely an example of what such an answer might look like in theory. Diogenes' 'I am a citizen of the world' is the pagan precursor of Paul's letter to the Galatians: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus' (*KJV*, Galatians 3:28).

Julian's tragedy is that he interprets Maximus' prophecies about the 'third kingdom' as an invitation to 'possess the world' for himself alone.[138] Rather than seek to live in the world of five senses, Julian seeks to conquer it, disempowering and disembodying himself by the futility of this mad desire. Moi argues that 'Julian is someone who has never managed to come to terms with his own *finitude* [her emphasis]—that is to say, with his own separate, embodied, human existence.'[139] Evidence of this is his inability to comprehend that distinction between Christ's bodily existence and his spiritual afterlife: Julian idealizes the latter, but forgets its reliance on the former. Christ was a 'rebel' but also a victim of retribution: his bodily death as well as his teachings caused his immortality. Similarly, Diogenes' practising what he preached rather than *vice versa* – that is, preaching only when questioned about his unusual lifestyle – led to his fame and enduring influence. For Ibsen, it is only by matching words with wordless deeds that as human beings we accept our finitude, since unlike words, which can be carried from life to life, wordless deeds are finite propositions. *Emperor and Galilean* therefore deconstructs idealist cosmopolitanism in its second half, culminating in Julian's death which symbolizes the death of the fanatical idealism he has turned to evil ends. Julian's death, with its cutting down to size of his idealism and its simultaneous reduction of world history to the arbitrary death of one man, is also a forerunner of Ibsen's more down-to-earth, transparently 'provincial' cosmopolitanism

[137] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 273.
[138] Ibsen, *Emperor and Galilean* (Archer), 275.
[139] Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 206.

in the later social dramas, to which I now turn. In the following chapter, I analyse Ibsen's prose dramas, in both Archer's and more recent translations, in terms of 'provincial cosmopolitanism' and through the filter of their contemporaneous Anglophone reception.

Chapter 6: James, Ibsen's provincial cosmopolitanism, and William Archer's *The Great Analysis*

i. James, William Archer's Ibsen, and Ibsen's cosmopolitan reception

In their recent analysis of Ibsen's international influence in shaping a 'world drama', Narve Fulsås and Tore Rem conclude by calling Ibsen 'the provincial world poet', whose importance was such that he was riven by critics and interpreters from many nations into 'a great variety of "Ibsens" by the beginning of the twentieth century.'[1] They add, however, that although Ibsen 'had become "great" as English literature' (to take as an example the particular 'Ibsen' with which I am here concerned), he 'was generally not taken as an immediately available "cosmopolitan" author who had managed to break free from his nationality; on the contrary, the national was made into a major code of appropriation.'[2]

Here is a contradiction: how can Ibsen, if moored to his perceived nationality (that of Norway) be made '"great" in English literature'? How can the acceptance of an author writing in one language be seen in terms of that author's nationality when he or she is valued only when translated into another language? Such a paradox is similar to that of the 'provincial cosmopolitan' in George Eliot's and Henry James's fictions: the person rooted in and influenced by a particular place who nevertheless participates in a wider vision of borderless humanity reinforced by a sense of the incessant shifting of those borders across historical time. It should be noted that many of Ibsen's Anglophone critics, including James, Arthur Symons, and George Bernard Shaw, as well as William Archer, were involved in the contemporaneous debates about cosmopolitanism, literary and political, in the 1890s. James, I argue in this chapter, is the keystone: being a writer for whom cosmopolitanism rests on its antithesis, the provincial or marginal, he was in a unique position to analyse Ibsen through the lens of a detached observer for whom nationality is only one point of contemporary reference in a wider debate about world citizenship.

Fulsås and Rem admirably and exhaustively detail Ibsen's reception and his appropriation as part of 'world drama' in as wide as possible an international context, but maintain a focus on Scandinavia, and Norway in particular. Yet Ibsen's effect on his Anglophone critics, who watched and read Ibsen in William Archer's translations, has been less studied in terms of the debate surrounding the 'cosmopolitan' and the 'provincial'. Fulsås and Rem point out that

[1] Fulsås and Rem, *Ibsen, Scandinavia and the Making of a World Drama*, 237.
[2] Fulsås and Rem, *Ibsen, Scandinavia, and the Making of World Drama*, 237-238.

'Ibsen's existence in English [in the early twentieth century] was characterised by a still prevailing literature-theatre divide'.[3] James noticed this divide early on, and yet there can be little doubt that James valued Ibsen both as literature and as theatre. To this English dissociation of sensibility must be added the subdivisions of Ibsen as read surreptitiously by the solitary reader (closet-drama Ibsen) and as read openly; and Ibsen as performed publicly (permitted by the censors) and independently (as a private theatrical, such as the Independent Theatre's 1891 production of *Ghosts*). James, as one might expect given his sociability combined with his romantic valuing of solitude, encompasses all these divisions, and all these 'Ibsens'. James, more than anyone, embodies the overlap between the debates around cosmopolitanism in the 1890s and the debates surrounding Ibsen in the same period.

The terms 'classic' and 'independent', which Fulsås and Rem rightly determine to be central to Ibsen's gradual Anglicization between 1889 and 1914,[4] are terms which imply de-historicization: Ibsen, the words imply, is somehow timeless and detached from the normal run of things; he is both elevated and peripheral. But the terms 'cosmopolitan' and 'provincial' are another lens through which to view Ibsen's Anglophone reception. These are terms which, as I have shown, play an important if disguised part in the recalibration of history and historical consciousness performed by George Eliot and Henry James in their novels. What Fulsås and Rem call the 'late "novelisation"'[5] of Ibsen can be seen also in terms of Ibsen's resonance with a novelist such as James, for whom Ibsen is paradoxically both strange and familiar, a disconcerting novelty and yet immediately part of the furniture. Ibsen's becoming an instant classic, or Ibsen's being seen as a playwright independent of the ordinary commercial theatre, does not mean that his plays were construed as ahistorical.

Just as Fulsås and Rem emphasize that their view of 'world literature […] should encompass the need to historicize',[6] so it should be emphasized that contemporary evaluation and reception of Ibsen was increasingly, through the 1890s and 1900s, preoccupied with placing Ibsen in a 'world-historical' context, even if that context was sometimes most notable by its obscurity. Ibsen's early-twentieth-century Anglophone reception, as I shall show towards the end of this chapter, increasingly stressed his historical validity, even prescience. It is in keeping with Ibsen's historical consciousness than one important aspect of literary

[3] Fulsås and Rem, *Ibsen, Scandinavia, and the Making of World Drama*, 213.
[4] Their section on Ibsen's canonization in Britain is entitled 'Britain: Classic Literature, Independent Theatre' (213).
[5] Fulsås and Rem, *Ibsen, Scandinavia, and the Making of World Drama*, 237.
[6] Fulsås and Rem, *Ibsen, Scandinavia, and the Making of World Drama*, 237.

canonization is a retrospective attribution of prescience, a recognition that the author's vision has been vindicated in hindsight. Ibsen's canonization is also in keeping with his incipient cosmopolitanism. Ibsen's late disclaimer (to which I shall return) that he did not feel at home in any particular place, is provocation enough to consider Ibsen's reception by worldwide audiences as a dramatist of his hitherto invisible 'nation', Norway. But it is also pertinent to his contemporary reception from within another 'nation', England, as a disguised cosmopolitan writer, a citizen-dramatist of the world. Indeed, Ibsen's characters are poignant in one sense precisely because they appear to lack the critical forums in which to debate such topics as cosmopolitanism and nationalism that Ibsen's plays inspired in their first international audiences. Henry James was the shrewdest Anglophone critic of Ibsen in the 1890s: his criticism is predicated on an awareness of Ibsen's extraordinary multivalence, and before turning to Archer's translations of Ibsen, an analysis of James's criticism is necessary as setting down the terms by which Ibsen is visible as disguisedly cosmopolitan.

ii. James, the 'cosmopolite', and 'provincial' Ibsen

James's notion of the 'cosmopolite' was subtly expanded and intensified by his reception of Ibsen on the page and on stage. Early in 1897, after reading William Archer's translation of Henrik Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman* (1896), James wrote to Elizabeth Robins, the American actress who gave London its first Hedda Gabler and Ella Rentheim, referring to Ibsen as 'our Northern Henry! […] an old darling!'[7] Histrionic as this praise might sound, the first epithet reveals an underlying ambivalence in James's attitude towards the dramatist. 'Our Northern Henry' takes grammatical possession of Ibsen as a common object of devotion for actors, readers, and spectators alike; it locates him as 'Northern' (Scandinavian) and therefore remote from the major metropolitan centres of Europe; and it demonstrates an affinity with Ibsen by rendering his name in its English cognate, thereby inviting comparison with the other 'Henry', James himself. To James writing in confidence, then, Ibsen was at once a common possession, a foreign object of scrutiny, and a literary soulmate.

In 'Occasional Paris' (1877), James claims, as we have seen, that '[t]o be a cosmopolite is an accident, but one must make the best of it',[8] yet, as Jessica Berman notes, this had given way '[b]y the [eighteen-]nineties' to a sense of cosmopolitanism as 'more than an accident',[9] a

[7] Henry James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Volume 2: Drama*, edited by Peter Collister (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 453.
[8] James, *Collected Travel Writings: The Continent*, 721.
[9] Berman, 'Cosmopolitanism', 142.

pose all too easily adopted in *fin-de-siècle* London. In this context, Ibsen must be read as further intensifying James's notion of the cosmopolitan. It has already been argued that James's drama and post-1895 fiction owes much to Ibsen: in 1948 Leon Edel squarely identified James's 1908 play, *The Other House*, adapted from his 1896 novel, as having 'all the qualities of an Ibsen play';[10] Michael Egan's *Henry James: The Ibsen Years* (1972) stresses James's 'gradual assimilation of Ibsen's symbolic manner', arguing that 'it was Ibsen who showed James how to use Hawthorne' in his late fiction;[11] while recently Merle A. Williams has persuasively argued that, by 1897, 'Ibsen's [dramatic] technique had begun to impregnate James's own experimentation with fiction'.[12] Ibsen also caused James to reconfigure his own identity as a 'cosmopolite'. James, Ibsen's shrewdest but least understood Anglophone critic, was not only a convert to Ibsenism; his own late writings are exemplars of Ibsen's direct influence on a generation of writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In *William Wetmore Story and His Friends* (1903) and *The American Scene* (1907), James loses himself in the recollection of impressions into which his cosmopolitan identity is almost subsumed. In the former book, James immerses himself, and Story, in the particularity of anecdote, writing mostly about Story's 'friends' in the Anglo-American Roman society of the 1850s, '60s, and '70s. In the latter book, he feels newly estranged in twentieth-century America, lamenting what he sees to be the effacement of the particularity of people, places, and ideas, except where these are overlaid with a sense of the past. Yet despite their substitution of involuntary memory for fixed itinerary, both books reveal James's interest in form as constitutive of artistic and moral integrity. Similarly, Ibsen's plays, beginning with *The Pillars of Society* (1877), demonstrate an ethic and an aesthetic of form, as well as a thematic concern with characters' perceptions of the differences between countries: Norway, continental Europe, England, and the United States.

James wrote four occasional pieces on Ibsen between 1891 and 1897. Just as the letter to Robins suggests James's final surrender to the transnational Ibsen phenomenon of the 1890s, much of James's fascination with Ibsen's achievement is crystallized in the last of these published texts, one of the 'London' notes James wrote for the American journal *Harper's*

[10] Henry James, *The Complete Plays of Henry James*, edited by Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1949), 68.
[11] Michael Egan, *Henry James: The Ibsen Years* (London: Vision Press, 1972), 29.
[12] Merle A. Williams, 'Knowing the Dramatist by His Choices: James, Ibsen, and *The Awkward Age*', *The Henry James Review* 36:2 (Spring 2015), 117-128 (117).

Weekly (later reprinted, incongruously but tellingly, in James's *Notes on Novelists* [1914]). The piece is dated 6th February 1897, two years after the disaster of James's effort to conquer the London stage *à la* Ibsen. In it, James begins with an *apologia* for his present interest in Ibsen despite the necessity of reading him in translation, in terms which imply both the impoverished state of English literature and the incuriosity of American readers who expect only news of literature written by English authors. James's opening remark, 'I am afraid the interest of the world of native letters is not at this moment so great as to make us despise mere translation as an aid to curiosity',[13] obscurely and almost oxymoronically suggests both literary London and an international or utopian republic of letters: 'native letters' may mean native to London, to England, or to the transatlantic English-speaking world that James, by the very nature and life-cycle of the article itself, seeks to bind more tightly together.

James goes on to illustrate, in a self-consciously repetitive, self-justifying manner, the unique place Ibsen continues to hold in London:

> There is indeed no reason why we should forebear to say in advance […] that nothing is easier to concede than that Ibsen—contentious name!—would be much less remarked if he were one of a dozen. It is impossible, in London at least, to shut one's eyes to the fact that if to so many ingenious minds he is a kind of pictorial monster, a grotesque of the sign of a side-show, this is at least partly because his form has a monstrous rarity. […] Ibsen, however, is a text, and Ibsen is read, and Ibsen contradicts the custom and confounds the prejudice, with the effect thereby, in an odd way, of being doubly an exotic. His violent substance imposes, as it were, his insidious form; it is not (as would have seemed more likely) the form that imposes the substance.[14]

If Ibsen 'is a kind of pictorial monster […] partly because his form has a monstrous rarity', James seems here by 'form' to mean Ibsen's presence as an influencer of public debate. Yet when James claims that Ibsen's 'violent substance imposes, as it were, his insidious form', it is unclear where Ibsen the imagined 'monster' ends and the artistic 'form' of his plays begins. One seeps uncannily into the other.

Not only does Ibsen's 'form' have 'a monstrous rarity'; James later praises him, in a near-chiasmic echo of the earlier remark, for 'his rare mastery of form'.[15] Ibsen's 'form' is, in the two senses combined, both monstrously rare and rarely masterful. Kirsten Shepherd-Barr interprets these remarks as 'thoroughly evocative of contemporary evolutionary language, on the one hand seeming to concede that Ibsen seems an oddity, a human freak, yet on the other

[13] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama*, 453.
[14] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama*, 453-454.
[15] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama*, 455.

hand praising him as highly "evolved"—the quintessence, perhaps, of contrarianism.'[16] Certainly, James is praising Ibsen in Darwinian terms; but he is also imagining Ibsen as a kind of supernatural creator, breathing life into art and transforming the superficially crude into the formally beautiful. It is the 'admirable closeness' of 'the whole tissue of relations', James writes in his first Ibsen essay (1891), which 'converts [Ibsen's] provincialism into artistic urbanity'.[17]

If Ibsen's 'recurrent ugliness of surface'[18] is mitigated by form, James, in *The American Scene*, finds the opposite scenario in the landscape and architecture of America. In New Hampshire, he finds that '[t]he ugliness—one pounced on this, indeed, on this as a talisman of the future —was the so complete abolition of forms; if, with so little reference to their past, present or future possibility, they could be said to have been so much honoured as to be abolished'.[19] Form, then, holds the key to aesthetic beauty, and the recognition of the 'absence of forms' as constitutive of ugliness goes so far as to 'save the restless analyst [James] from madness'.[20] James describes the risk of entirely losing his sense of self, and his wording suggests that this predication of sanity on recognising the presence or absence of forms is something carried over from his appreciation of Ibsen's formalism.

Translation is another potential barrier to a cosmopolitan identity that James, in his insistence on the value of impressions, manages to avert. His phrase, 'mere translation', does not mean to disparage translation, but rather to emphasize that translations such as Archer's need not prevent the free exercise of the reader's 'curiosity'. Indeed, the importance of Ibsen to James is, in the first place, his arousal of that curiosity, despite (or because of) the anti-intellectual bent of London commercial conditions in which 'the more theatres multiply the less one reads a play'.[21] James contradicts 'the wisdom of booksellers'[22] by asserting Ibsen's novelty in this regard. Ibsen's readability as a dramatist is as 'exotic', for James, as his Norwegianness. By the same token, Shakespeare is exotic: James admits, in the first 'London' note concerning Ibsen (1897), that 'I like Shakespeare better […] "for reading"; but

[16] Kirsten Shepherd-Barr, *Theatre and Evolution from Ibsen to Beckett* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 80.
[17] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama*, 377.
[18] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama*, 373.
[19] James, *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*, 376.
[20] James, *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*, 376.
[21] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama*, 453-454.
[22] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama*, 454.

I like Ibsen better for—Northumberland Avenue'.[23] Indeed, in his 1907 Introduction to *The Tempest*, James echoes his description of Ibsen when he calls Shakespeare 'one of those monsters of precocity […] cut off in their comparative prime', who 'affirm[ed]' in *The Tempest* 'the mystery of his abrupt and complete cessation'.[24]

As one might expect, James attaches high value to the text and the reader-author relationship, but the text is not explicitly severed from the author: James is incorrigibly post-Romantic in identifying Ibsen the artist with the private interior text. Toril Moi emphasizes that Ibsen predates the high modernist belief in what Fredric Jameson calls the 'autonomy of the aesthetic',[25] under which art transcends ethics and the artwork is venerated apart from the artist. She later claims that we should not 'take Henry James's or Henrik Ibsen's unenthusiastic response to [painterly] Impressionism [in the 1870s] for a lack or a flaw. It is, rather, precious evidence that Ibsen and his contemporaries inhabited an aesthetic world that has been largely obliterated by the comprehensive victory of modernism'.[26] Nevertheless, James in the 1890s seems just as interested in Ibsen's effects as his ideas, so that although Archer's translation must at best be alternative rather than authoritative, it is valuable for being 'read' in London, where, except for Shakespeare's, plays are not otherwise read. To that extent, Ibsen 'is' his reception, too. One aspect of this that James omits to mention is the Lord Chamberlain's 1892 ban on public performances of *Ghosts* (1881); but that well-known circumstance only adds significance to the notion that Ibsen's authority and his 'doubly exotic' effect are contained on the page, if this is taken collectively to mean the original Dano-Norwegian and its translation-variants. Ironically, it is Ibsen who makes James edge towards an intuitive belief in the autonomy of art and aesthetic evaluative criteria. 'Ibsen', 'contentious name!', is also a convenient label.

James cannot, on another level, disguise his ordinary excitement at the receipt of the three translations of *Borkman*:

> Mr. William Archer has just published his version of *John Gabriel Borkman*, of which, moreover, French and German versions reach me at the same moment. There are therefore all the elements of a fresh breeze in the wind—one has already a sense as of a cracking of whips and a girding of loins.

[23] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama*, 450. Northumberland Avenue in London was then known for its theatres.
[24] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama*, 495.
[25] Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 20.
[26] Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 111.

> You may by this time be terribly tired of it all in America, but […] we have had very recent evidence that languor, here, in this connection, is by no means yet the dominant note.[27]

James's use of the present tense elides the time interval between reading and criticizing. Such elision could be called cosmopolitan in its concession to an illusion of a simultaneous and universal reception of Ibsen; but it is also a subtle simulation of the remarkable fact that Ibsen, by 1897, was being performed in many European and American cities in several languages. London, however, was the epicentre of critical debate about Ibsen in the English-speaking world. Consequently, it is with an almost dandified detachment ('You may all be terribly tired of this in America') that James performs the remarkable task of addressing, from London, an American readership about the London reception of a Norwegian dramatist now living in Oslo (Christiania) after many years in Germany and Italy whose new play he, James, has read side-by-side in three translations!

Despite this insouciance, James cannot decide how best to convey the past, present, and projected effects of Ibsen upon the reading and theatre-going public in London. He liberally mixes his metaphors, anticipating 'all the elements of a fresh breeze in the wind' and at the same time 'a cracking of whips and a girding of loins'. Ibsen is healthily stimulating but also controversially divisive, above all in London where Ibsenist and anti-Ibsenist factions had emerged after *A Doll's House* (1879) received its London *première* in 1889. James situates himself above such black-and-whiteness; indeed, his appreciation of Ibsen's effect is linguistically equivocal. Images of health and illness, lightness and heaviness, overlap. For James, the 'dispute' over Ibsen in London 'constitutes one of the few cases of contagious discussion of a matter not political […] of which I remember to have felt, in a heavy air, the engaging titillation':

> In London, in general, I think, the wandering breath of criticism is the stray guest at the big party—the shy young man whom nobody knows. In this remarkable instance the shy young man has ventured to pause and hover, has lighted on a topic, introduced himself and, after a gasp of consternation in the company, seen a little circle gather round him. I can only speak as one of the little circle, testifying to my individual glee.[28]

James's terminology is quasi-erotic: the 'dispute' is 'contagious' (one thinks here of Oswald Alving's unnamed disease in *Ghosts*) but also 'an engaging titillation'. Voyeuristically, James 'gather[s]' round the representative 'shy young man' with 'glee'. In this sense, too,

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[27] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama*, 454.
[28] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama*, 454.

Ibsen is exotic: he has, from a distance, brought people out of their reticence and into a new cultural awareness.

Author, text, and reception, then, are variously described as 'contentious', 'exotic', 'violent', 'insidious', 'contagious', and 'engaging'; as 'a fresh breeze', 'a cracking of whips', 'a girding of loins', and 'wandering breath'. When James refers to *Little Eyolf* (1894) and *Borkman* as 'each a *chassez-croisez* of lamps burning, as in tasteless parlours' in which '[t]here is a positive odor of spiritual paraffine [*sic*]'[29] the metaphors have become borrowed Ibsenian stage-set symbols. At the root of James's vocabulary is a paradoxical vision of Ibsen's drama and the critical debate it provokes as both purgative of the 'heavy air' of moral convention and revelatory, even symptomatic, of some semi-illicit secret.

The drama of Oswald Alving in *Ghosts* presents the same symbolic contradiction. Sunlight, which Oswald desires in his final delirium, is at once purgative and condemnatory; it may expunge or expose illness tainted by immorality. Mrs Alving attempts to console Oswald when she observes the daybreak:

> And do you see, Oswald, what a lovely day we're going to have? Brilliant sunshine! Now you'll really be able to see your home.[30]

Oswald then chillingly replies, 'Mother, give me the sun'.[31] Daybreak exposes the horror of Oswald's condition, yet he desires sunlight as a substitute for death; indeed, the sun symbolizes both the purgation of death and the hope of an afterlife. The English word 'sun' also has the homonym 'son', a final, subliminal reminder that Oswald's predicament is inherited from his father. Ibsen enables the reader to 'really be able to see your home'; but this new light also exposes horrors otherwise hidden in plain sight. Oswald's rotting brain, which Oswald himself likens to 'cherry-coloured velvet',[32] symbolizes the bourgeois home itself, a home comfortable but suffocating. Just as Ibsen's drama is laden with such paradoxes, seemingly multiplied in translation, so James cannot adequately explain to himself (let alone his readers) the man he calls 'a provincial of provincials' and 'an extraordinary curiosity'.[33]

Having praised Ibsen's 'rare mastery of form', James at last admits his principal dilemma and its effects:

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[29] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama,* 455.
[30] Ibsen, *Ghosts, Enemy, Duck* (Archer), 100.
[31] Ibsen, *Ghosts, Enemy, Duck* (Archer), 100.
[32] Ibsen, *Ghosts, Enemy, Duck* (Archer), 97.
[33] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama,* 454.

> The contrast between this form—so difficult, so civilized, so even *rafinée*—and the barrenness and bleakness of his little northern democracy is the source of half the hard, frugal charms that he puts forth. […] There is no small-talk, there are scarcely any manners. On the other hand there is so little vulgarity that that of itself has almost the effect of a deeper, a more lonely provincialism.[34]

James's tacit endorsement of Ibsen appears to rest, paradoxically, on the cosmopolitan appeal of his provincialism; that is, on a provincialism made more palatable, as well as 'deeper' and 'more lonely' (for greater emphasis, James avoids the simpler term, 'lonelier'), by the near-absence of un-cosmopolitan 'vulgarity'. The oxymoron 'hard, frugal charms' conveys Ibsen's successful reconciliation of formalism with the moral sense. But James seems also to envy Ibsen the artistic freedom his ostensibly narrow subject-matter affords. Ibsen, for James, evokes an entire cultural outlook by a tightly structured combination of synecdoche, symbol, and naturalistic dialogue; it is '*his* little northern democracy' (my emphasis) to possess artistically. For James, nothing could be more antithetical to true cosmopolitanism than vulgarity, yet vulgarity is precisely what has tainted cosmopolitanism in London. Consequently, he must look to 'provincial' Ibsen to find an urbanity of form to replace vulgarized, even provincialized, urban manners.

Although by 'a more lonely provincialism' James seems to refer to Ibsen's characters, the description also encompasses their creator. Certainly, Ibsen's years of self-imposed exile in Rome, Dresden, and Munich during the 1870s and 1880s (one might call these years Ibsen's more lonely cosmopolitanism) were more artistically fruitful than James's contemporaneous London *flânerie*. Indeed, it is tempting to see in James's 1897 retreat to Rye a similar self-imposed exile motivated by the desire to create tauter, more symbolic art. But Ibsen's plays, when read, appealed to even the most immovable metropolitan decadent. Arthur Symons had no trouble reconciling Ibsen with his own intimate experience of urban modernity:

> To read one of [Ibsen's] plays is to pass an hour in a great centre of existence—in a great city, where the crowds have their passions and agitations, or, better still, in some small place, a selected corner out of all this bustle, in which the action, more circumscribed, can be concentrated, and thus strike home with a deeper intensity.[35]

If 'deeper intensity' depends upon the circumscription and concentration of action, Ibsen's theatre is cosmopolitan in its recognition that prototypically urban 'passions and agitations' may exist anywhere in modern Western societies. Arnold Bennett, a Londonized writer of

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[34] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama*, 455.
[35] Arthur Symons, 'From "Henrik Ibsen" (1889)', in *The Fin-de-Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History c. 1880-1900*, edited by Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University (2008), 129-131 (129).

provincial English life, felt that Ibsen had 'lifted parochialism to the mundane and the universal […] Fundamentally, we are all living in Bergen'.[36] Here, Bennett imagines the town where Ibsen first worked in the theatre as a young man, rather than his childhood town of Skien, to constitute the backdrop of the social dramas.

Symons later claimed that 'Ibsen has developed a personal kind of Impressionism (in *Hedda Gabler* [1890]) and of Symbolism (in *The Master Builder* [1892])'.[37] This distinction points towards national differences in Ibsen's critical reception and interpretative presentation. Pascale Casanova has analysed these through 'a kind of relational or structural comparison' of Ibsen's introduction in England (as a social realist), France (as both a naturalist and a symbolist), and Ireland (as a 'weapon against English domination' and against 'Irish conformism').[38] Casanova describes the four 'introducers' of Ibsen (George Bernard Shaw in London, André Antoine and Lugné-Poe in Paris, and the young James Joyce in Dublin) as, like Ibsen himself, 'marginal figure[s] outside the rules of the game'.[39] But James was even more an outsider in his refusal to jump on any single critical bandwagon. He had feet in both London and Paris, while Dublin perhaps functioned as a kind of ancestral subconscious (James, who was of Scots-Irish origin on both sides of his family, visited the city in 1895, the year after its first performance of an Ibsen play).

Ibsen, for James, 'gives us the sense of life',[40] yet is also 'a sturdy old symbolist'.[41] Indeed, '[t]he mingled reality and symbolism of it all give us an Ibsen within an Ibsen'.[42] But which is the inner Ibsen, the realist or the symbolist? How can reality and symbolism be 'mingled' if one is interior (and perhaps inferior) to the other? The typically Jamesian ambiguity here speaks of a genuinely ambivalent attitude. Yet it is also highly cosmopolitan of James seamlessly to weave together these apparently conflicting interpretations without locating them geographically and thereby provincializing them. James is not aloofly Olympian but

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[36] Quoted in Michael Caines, 'International (and parochial) Ibsen', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 24 October 2014. https://www.the-tls.co.uk/international-and-parochial-ibsen/ (accessed November 6, 2017).
[37] Arthur Symons, 'The Decadent Movement in Literature' [1893], in *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890s: An Anthology of British Poetry and Prose*, edited by Karl Beckson, revised edition (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1981), 134-150 (149).
[38] Pascale Casanova, 'The Ibsen battle: a comparative analysis of the introduction of Henrik Ibsen in France, England and Ireland', in *Anglo-French Attitudes: Comparisons and Transfers Between English and French Intellectuals Since the Eighteenth Century*, edited by Christophe Charle, Julien Vincent and Jay Winter (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 214-232 (215, 224, 228).
[39] Casanova, 'The Ibsen battle: a comparative analysis of the introduction of Henrik Ibsen in France, England and Ireland', 217.
[40] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama*, 384.
[41] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama*, 455.
[42] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama*, 385.

transnationally sympathetic. Ibsen, too, is visible in this light as subtly cosmopolitan. The crutch with which little Eyolf walks, for instance, dramatizes the misfortune of physical disability as well as symbolising dysfunctional marriage and parental neglect. Here is 'an Ibsen within an Ibsen', eluding singular interpretation and stimulating international debate. This naturalist-symbolist Ibsen further suggests a mingled cosmopolitan-provincial Ibsen and an aesthetic formalist within a moral anti-idealist.

iii. Ibsen's disguised cosmopolitanism from *The Pillars of Society* to *When We Dead Awaken*

Other London critics recognized Ibsen's disguised cosmopolitanism. Shaw, whom Moi identifies with Ibsen's 'social and cultural position' as a postcolonial exile,[43] concludes his essay *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, first published in 1891 and substantially expanded after Ibsen's death, by claiming that '[w]hat Ibsen insists on is that there is no golden rule […] [Ibsenism's] quintessence is that there is no formula'.[44] Shaw's undidactic Ibsen is cosmopolitan as well as realist: there are no absolute borders. Conventional morality, culturally conditioned, is replaceable by a universal morality of individual dignity; and the individual man or woman can, within limits, decide how to live his or her life in a borderless world, slamming the door (like Nora Helmer in *A Doll's House*) behind them. Edmund Gosse, a friend of James's who, like Ibsen, fled a puritanical upbringing, notes in Zolaesque determinist fashion 'the slight and obstinate exoticism, which kept all [Ibsen's] forebears more or less foreigners still in their Norwegian home', but decides that '[i]t is, in fact, a vain attempt to detect elements of his ancestors' in Henrik.[45] As Gosse put it in the 1911 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, with the same Zolaesque precision but also implying that Ibsen's Norwegianness was more cultural than ancestral, '[f]or some five generations the [Ibsen] family had consisted on the father's side of the blending of Danish, German and Scottish races, with no intermixture of pure Norwegian.'[46] Evidently, Ibsen was construed by English-speaking critics as an exile on many fronts: temperamentally adrift from his homeland and ancestors as well as from the Philistines and Idealists Shaw identifies as his (Ibsen's) enemies; not only a lone realist, but a new kind of cosmopolitan, beyond centre and periphery as well as (aesthetically) beyond good and evil.

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[43] Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 65.
[44] George Bernard Shaw, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism: Now Completed to the Death of Ibsen*, 3rd edition (London: Constable, 1929), 172.
[45] Edmund Gosse, *Ibsen* (1907; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), 2.
[46] Gosse, 'Ibsen, Henrik'. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911_Encyclopædia_Britannica/Ibsen,_Henrik (accessed April 28, 2020).

This new cosmopolitanism, apparently collapsing the metropolitan-provincial divide, is frequently made apparent in the social dramas. Both provincial insularity and bohemian-metropolitan pretensions are mocked, and characters variously return to or set out from (putative) Norway with ambitions or hopes they find are stifled by underwhelming 'outer' reality as much as by overwhelming 'inner' morality. *An Enemy of the People* (1882) sees Dr Stockmann, Medical Officer of a town's municipal Baths, construe the town in terms which remind the reader or spectator of the importance of perspective in determining where the centre (geographical, cultural, social) lies. Stockmann's quarrel with his brother, the Mayor ('Burgomaster' in Archer's translation), foreshadows the brothers' later, more urgent disagreement about the Baths:

> DR STOCKMANN: After all, what a glorious time we live in! It seems as though a whole new world were springing up around us.
> BURGOMASTER: Do you really think so?
> DR STOCKMANN: Of course you can't see it as clearly as I do. You've passed your life in the midst of it all, and that deadens the impression. But I, who have had to vegetate all those years in that little hole in the north, hardly ever seeing a soul that could speak a stimulating word to me—all this affects me as if I had suddenly dropped into the heart of some great metropolis—
> BURGOMASTER: Hm; metropolis—
> DR STOCKMANN: Oh! I know well enough that things are on a small scale here compared with many other places. But there's vitality and promise […] that's the main point.[47]

Dr Stockmann's impression of the town is identical to Symons' reaction to watching an Ibsen play, an example of the curious, possibly meta-theatrical effect by which Ibsen incorporates, or pre-empts, the sensations of the reader or spectator within the presented fictional world. To the Mayor, the town is mundane; to Dr Stockmann, it is burgeoning compared with the unspecified 'little hole in the north'. That Dr Stockmann is later faced with shouts of 'He hates his country! He hates the people!' even after claiming, 'I love my native town so much that I'd rather ruin it than see it flourish on a lie',[48] further suggests the significance of perspective in determining what is deemed important: to the townspeople, the town is the nation in miniature, whereas to Stockmann it is distinct and detachable from the nation.

[47] Ibsen, *Ghosts, Enemy, Duck* (Archer), 111-12.
[48] Ibsen, *Ghosts, Enemy, Duck* (Archer), 205-206.

Unless they should reach the North Pole – and Arnold Rubek in *When We Dead Awaken* (1899) proposes taking 'a tedious coasting-voyage to the North'[49] – there is always somewhere remoter onto which Ibsen's characters may project ideas of backwardness. Correspondingly, London, Paris, and New York evoke ideas of wealth, culture, and sexual licence. In *The Pillars of Society*, Johan Tönnesen, himself newly returned from America, caustically reminds Karsten Bernick how 'you came back like a very prince from your foreign tour; you'd been both to London and to Paris'.[50] In *Ghosts*, Oswald announces, to Pastor Manders' apparent shock, that the only 'immorality' he has encountered 'in artistic circles' is 'when one or other of our pattern husbands and fathers has come to Paris to have a look round on his own account, and has done the artists the honour of visiting their humble haunts'.[51] More cryptically, in *Borkman,* Fanny Wilton proposes 'going abroad, to the South' accompanied by Erhart Borkman, to whom she has become attached, and 'little Frida Foldal' who is to 'get more instruction in music'.[52] In both *Ghosts* and *Borkman*, continental Europe is associated with the intertwining of artistic education and free love.

It is essential to Ibsen's realism that we do not see these foreign places represented except through the partial or unreliable accounts, longings, and imaginings of different but invariably flawed characters. Partly for this reason, Ibsen's 'strangely inscrutable art'[53] is something almost ghostly for James, who frequently deconstructs it by pinpointing what it lacks. He defines it almost as much by absence – 'the absence of humour, the absence of free imagination, and the absence of style'[54] – as by presence, but with the following knowing qualification:

> It is always difficult to give an example of an absent quality, and, if the romantic is even less present in Ibsen than the comic, this is best proved by the fact that everything seems to us inveterately observed.[55]

James's obsession with absence can be seen as proto-Derridean (James is deconstructing, *avant la lettre*, what Jacques Derrida would call the metaphysics of presence); but so, less obviously, is Ibsen's preoccupation with having his characters refer to places, people, and

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[49] Henrik Ibsen, *Little Eyolf, John Gabriel Borkman, When We Dead Awaken*, [edited and translated] with introduction by William Archer (The Collected Works of Henrik Ibsen, XI) (London: William Heinemann, 1907), 374.
[50] Henrik Ibsen, *The League of Youth, The Pillars of Society, A Doll's House*, edited and translated by William Archer (Henrik Ibsen's Prose Dramas, I) (London: Walter Scott, 1890), 205-206.
[51] Ibsen, *Ghosts, Enemy, Duck* (Archer), 35.
[52] Ibsen, *Eyolf, Borkman, Dead* (Archer), 291.
[53] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama*, 384.
[54] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama*, 372.
[55] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama*, 373.

times other than the immediate. The coherence of the plays' action depends entirely on these aspects of the unseen, and it is the unseen that makes James see more clearly what is 'inveterately observed'. The implied world beyond Norway never exists, however, in direct opposition to it. Dr Stockmann's image of being 'dropped into the heart of some great metropolis' is ominous because no metropolis is specified. This gives the reader the impression of being themselves lost in an unknown location; indeed, we never learn the name of the Norwegian town.

It is precisely this kind of disconcerting dislocation that occurs in Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness* (1899), a text contemporaneous with *When We Dead Awaken*, widely read as undermining bourgeois ideas of spatial and temporal organization. After Marlow finishes his story, the narrator finds that 'the tranquil waterway […] seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness'.[56] The Thames is left unnamed, as is Brussels when Marlow describes having 'arrived in a city that always makes me think of a whited sepulchre'.[57] The former omission has the effect of merging the Thames with the River Congo, while the latter merges Brussels with London. In the same way, Ibsen's references to the outer world are phenomenological: the experience of various characters, including that of Stockmann, is directed towards it, and in turn it is directed back at them, affecting their immediate, local impressions, and heightening the reader's sense of incipient claustrophobia as the world becomes smaller and its connections denser.

Ibsen also anticipates Conrad in using the biblical 'whited sepulchres' metaphor ('Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres' [*KJV*, Matthew 23:27]) as a *leitmotif* throughout the social dramas. Stockmann denounces the infected Baths as 'a poisonous whited-sepulchre; noxious in the highest degree!';[58] Arnold Rubek reminds Irene how 'museums were always a horror to you; you used to call them grave-vaults'[59] (Peter Watts in his translation uses 'sepulchres' rather than 'grave-vaults'[60]); and in *Pillars*, Rörlund declares, 'In one word—they are whited sepulchres, these great communities of the modern world'[61] (Deborah Dawkin and Erik Skuggevik in their translation of the latter phrase

[56] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* [1899], edited by Owen Knowles, and 'The Congo Diary', edited by Robert Hampson (London: Penguin, 2007), 96.
[57] Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 11.
[58] Ibsen, *Ghosts, Enemy, Duck* (Archer), 124.
[59] Ibsen, *Eyolf, Borkman, Dead* (Archer), 412.
[60] Henrik Ibsen, *Ghosts and Other Plays*, edited and translated by Peter Watts (London: Penguin, 1964), 267.
[61] Ibsen, *League, Pillars, Doll's House* (Archer), 159.

opt for 'great modern-day societies'[62]). Here, too, the 'great communities' are not named, though New York is implied by the presence of the American ship (and later named in connection with it). Rörlund's cynicism makes it significant that Johan should imply having lived on the American frontier. He tells Dina that 'one has often to suffer much and work hard in the beginning',[63] since the many Norwegians emigrating to America in the nineteenth century usually settled in the Midwest, away from the established 'great communities' and their perceived immorality. Extreme contingency, then, attaches to the sense of place in the social dramas, and this reinforces the fragmentation of conventional moral values. Indeed, the tautness of Ibsen's form demands that the reader adopt a cosmopolitan outlook in imagining beyond both the borders of the text (including the geographical boundaries presented) and the characters' ethical demarcations.

Although Ibsen thus effectively cosmopolitanizes the reader, the *faux*-cosmopolitan lifestyle enabled by money is something Ibsen and James both came to regret. If it is doubtful whether Stockmann, Solness, or Hedda Gabler are disguised portraits of Ibsen himself, the autobiographical element in *When We Dead Awaken* is undeniable. Rubek's fame and fortune have enabled him 'to build myself the villa on the Lake of Taunitz, and the palazzo in the capital,—and all the rest of it'.[64] But he now prefers 'the little peasant hut'[65] that he demolished to build the villa, the hut where he and Irene used to consort. They 'have lived', a recent critic has noted, in 'a cosmopolitan city' (which Georg Brandes, Ibsen's pre-eminent critical champion in Scandinavia, confidently identified as Munich)'.[66] Thomas Mann, another resident of Munich in the 1890s, described the city as a 'half-rustic, half-cosmopolitan town'.[67] Indeed, Mann's single attempt at drama, *Fiorenza* (1905), not only resembles Eliot's *Romola* in its detailed description of Savonarola and Renaissance Florence; it has also been reckoned by one critic to document Mann's 'ambivalence towards Munich' where the young Mann found 'a rich, perhaps overrich [*sic*], artistic life'.[68] Like Mann,

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[62] Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House and Other Plays*, edited by Tore Rem, translated by Deborah Dawkin and Erik Skuggevik (The New Penguin Ibsen) (London: Penguin, 2016), 7.
[63] Ibsen, *League, Pillars, Doll's House* (Archer), 203.
[64] Ibsen, *Eyolf, Borkman, Dead* (Archer), 397.
[65] Ibsen, *Eyolf, Borkman, Dead* (Archer), 422.
[66] Mark B. Sandberg, *Ibsen's Houses: Architectural Metaphor and the Modern Uncanny* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 116.
[67] Quoted in Anthony Heilbut, *Thomas Mann: Eros and Literature* (1995; London: Papermac, 1997), 88. Heilbut also describes Mann's hometown, Lübeck, in Archerian-Ibsenian terms as possessing 'an attitude both cosmopolitan and provincial' (4).
[68] Ritchie Robertson, 'Savonarola in Munich: A Reappraisal of Thomas Mann's *Fiorenza*', *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, 74:1 (2005), 51-66 (54). https://doi.org/10.1080/09593683.2005.11716339 (accessed February 10, 2021).

Rubek is ambivalent about the claims of living for oneself as against the claims of living for others. A materialistic cosmopolitan lifestyle, in *When We Dead Awaken*, is dismissed, and replaced by a cosmopolitan ethic of personal privacy (and the integrity of that private life) combined with the public, international dissemination of art. Rubek's sculpture, 'The Resurrection Day', is, he reminds Irene, 'installed in a great museum somewhere—far out in the world'[69] (Anne-Marie Stanton-Ife translates it as 'a long way out in the world'[70]). This, Rubek feels, is his important legacy, and, other than Irene, it does not matter who sees it. Certainly, Ibsen had no scruples about disseminating and publicizing his work: from *Pillars* onwards, each play was published in Copenhagen some weeks in advance of the first performance, and quickly translated for foreign consumption.

America, one infers, would make a likely destination for Rubek's sculpture. In *The American Scene*, James describes the experience of revisiting, in 1904, what he remembered to be the original site of the Metropolitan Museum in New York:

> Was it in the garden [of the Presbyterian Hospital] also […] that the Metropolitan Museum had meanwhile struck me as standing?—the impression of a quite another hazard of *flânerie* this, and one of those memories, once more, that I find myself standing off from, as under the shadow of their too numerous suggestion. […] This superfluous consciousness of the original seat of the Museum, of where and what it had been, was one of those terrible traps to memory, about the town, which baited themselves with the cheese of association, so to speak […][71]

Ibsen, similarly, often creates the effect of the past returning to suffuse (and confuse) his characters' consciousness of the present: the aesthete Hedda Gabler, for instance, insists that she is 'exactly as I was' when she and Tesman left for their honeymoon in the Tyrol, only to register with surprise 'the leaves […] so yellow—so withered—on the trees'[72] (Dawkin and Skuggevik render this in hyperbolic, idiomatic American English as 'Everything's so yellow. And so withered'[73]), reminding her of the inevitability of change. James, likewise, recognizes the dangers of memory, for the *flâneur*, in overlaying present impressions with the 'superfluous consciousness' of the past. He describes the relocated and aggrandized Museum as 'a palace of art, truly, that sits there on the edge of the Park, rearing itself with a radiance,

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[69] Ibsen, *Eyolf, Borkman, Dead* (Archer), 412.
[70] Henrik Ibsen, *The Master Builder and Other Plays*, edited by Tore Rem, translated by Barbara Haveland and Anne-Marie Stanton-Ife (The New Penguin Ibsen) (London: Penguin, 2014), 275.
[71] James, *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*, 511-512.
[72] Henrik Ibsen, *Rosmersholm, The Lady from the Sea, Hedda Gabler*, edited and translated by William Archer (Henrik Ibsen's Prose Dramas, V) (London: Walter Scott, 1890), 258-259.
[73] Henrik Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler and Other Plays*, edited by Tore Rem, translated by Deborah Dawkin and Erik Skuggevik (The New Penguin Ibsen) (London: Penguin, 2019), 302.

yet offering you expanses to tread'.[74] It also represents 'that huge process of historic waste that the place in general [New York] keeps putting before you'.[75] If there are two broad sensory manifestations of cosmopolitanism, a heightened sense of the past and a heightened sense of the present, James, like Ibsen, reconciles them by superimposing the former onto the latter.

The new Metropolitan Museum nevertheless transcends the effects of time and commerce: with characteristic recourse to allegory, James imagines 'Education' seated 'in these marble halls' issuing 'instructions without regard to cost' that are 'going to be obeyed'; this 'inference', he adds, is supported by 'the palace roof arching to protect it as the dome of the theatre protects the performance'.[76] Museums, like theatres, literally enclose their educative power and oblige the visitor or spectator to receive it. This is why Rubek appears satisfied with his sculpture's public existence, and why Ibsen allowed his plays as wide a performance as possible and 'never seemed to notice' (so Arnold Bennett claimed) 'that he had been shot to pieces by the most influential dramatic critic [Clement Scott] in the biggest city in the world [London]'.[77] If Ibsen did in fact care about the critics, *Enemy* nevertheless demonstrates that his natural response was to produce a new artwork in which his counter-criticisms were enclosed. James's collected *Novels and Tales* (1907-9) was a similar attempt both to contain his creative authority and to publicize and disseminate his creation. That the edition became widely known as the 'New York Edition' also suggests James the veteran expatriate reasserting his Americanness. The implication is that, to be an American, he only needs to have experienced America in formative childhood and adolescence and at intervals thereafter.

The Bowery Theatre, which James remembers from its old days as a stage 'on which realism was yet to dawn' and 'an audience at one with it',[78] was also much changed by 1904:

> From the corner of the box of my so improved playhouse further down, the very name of which moreover had the cosmopolite lack of point, I made out, in the audience, the usual mere monotony of the richer exoticism.[79]

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[74] James, *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*, 512.
[75] James, *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*, 513.
[76] James, *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*, 513.
[77] Caines, 'International (and parochial) Ibsen'. https://www.the-tls.co.uk/international-and-parochial-ibsen/ (accessed November 6, 2017).
[78] James, *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*, 516.
[79] James, *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*, 516.

The imputation of arbitrariness to cosmopolitanism at first seems belittling, but we then recognize that James's recollections might themselves be said to have a 'lack of point' in the sense of lack of definition or orientation, and that the randomness of the theatre's new name (it was known as the Thalia Theatre in 1904) is emphasized by its omission. The 1904 theatre audience is also newly cosmopolitan, 'richer' (in several senses) than the remembered mid-century audiences. If Ibsen's Norway has 'practically no manners' but Ibsen is 'doubly an exotic', the same is true of modern America and Americans, where '[w]ages, in the country at large, are largely manners'[80] and the new inhabitants' 'exoticism' is made double (to James) by the background of familiar old haunts and the same old dollar-worship. Capitalism holds the disparate elements together, just as Ibsen's form makes his unmannered, unpoetic characters cohere. Ibsen also represents to James the 'realism' that he remembers as absent from 1850s New York theatre.

In this turn-of-the-century context, another 'Northern Henry', the Norwegian-American sculptor Hendrik Christian Andersen, looms large. Andersen, whom James met in Rome in 1899, was an equally Jamesian and Ibsenian figure, combining the youthful restlessness of Erhart Borkman and James's Hyacinth Robinson with the occupation of Arnold Rubek and James's Roderick Hudson. Despite James's affection for Andersen, it was in an Ibsenian spirit of anti-idealist cosmopolitanism that he criticized, in a famous letter of 1913, the younger man's grand plans for a 'World Centre of Communication':

> I simply loathe such pretentious forms of words as 'World' anything—they are to me mere monstrous sound without sense. The World is a prodigious & portentous & immeasurable affair, & I can't for a moment pretend to sit in my little corner here & 'sympathise with' proposals for dealing with it.[81]

It is obvious that James is not anti-cosmopolitan in denying that any individual has the measure of the world; although susceptible to moral idealism, in a philosophical sense he is anti-idealist, simply believing, like any empiricist, that experience must set the limits of knowledge.

If Ibsen made James more conscious of the world's immeasurability, James makes us see Ibsen as imposing, even monstrous, in his formal novelty yet also sympathetic in his attention to particularity. The perennial dilemma at the heart of cosmopolitanism, how to attain a sense of the universal and necessary without losing a sense of the particular and contingent, is

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[80] James, *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*, 517.
[81] Henry James, *Dearly Beloved Friends: Henry James's Letters to Younger Men*, edited by Susan E. Gunter and Steven H. Jobe (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 77.

something of which James was fully aware by 1913. Nevertheless, he teaches us that Ibsen's social dramas at least succeed in enabling the reader or spectator to extrapolate the universal from the particular through an imaginative effort. When James praises Ibsen's 'artistic urbanity', he is, like Dr Stockmann, non-specific as to the *urbis*: any city-dweller confronted by Ibsen's apparent provincialism will be appeased by it, and it is above all Ibsen's apparent appeasement of so many hardened metropolitans, converting them to formalist aesthetics through the tautness of his superficially provincial dramatic scenarios, that James considers so remarkable.

It should be remembered, nevertheless, that James was never without reverence for an earlier generation of Europeanized Americans. At the beginning of *William Wetmore Story*, he rejects what he sees as the complacency of the early twentieth century, in which 'we are contentedly cosmopolite […] and move about in a world that has been made for us both larger and more amusing',[82] allowing his imagination autonomy in recalling the past:

> Europe, for Americans, has, in a word, been made easy; it was anything but easy, however much it was inspiring, during that period of touching experiment […] in which the imagination of the present introducer must thus betray at the outset an inclination to lose itself.[83]

In permitting the imagination to 'lose itself', James also betrays the idea that his reflections on 'that period of touching experiment' will, like his reflections on modern America, be predicated on a loss of solid ground, on a notion of cosmopolitanism that has moved away from ego-centric, self-determined itinerary and towards a total immersion in impressions and the natural selectiveness of memory. This paradigm shift creates a new sense of identity founded upon its very dislocation, and which falls back, consequently, on impressions as ends in themselves, for which, James pre-emptively confesses in the preface to *The American Scene*, he 'would in fact go to the stake'.[84] Although in both *Story* and *Scene* James employs 'free imagination' in a way that he claims Ibsen does not, both books are formally promiscuous in a way that, without the example of Ibsen's tautness, James would not have become entirely conscious. It was also partly due to Ibsen that James re-engaged artistically with a transatlantic scene that had, by the twentieth century, come perfectly to match his description of Ibsen's plays as 'a tissue of relations […] of a closeness so fascinating'.[85]

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[82] James, *William Wetmore Story*, i.3.
[83] James, *William Wetmore Story*, i.4.
[84] James, *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*, 353.
[85] James, *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Vol 2: Drama*, 451.

This new understanding is evident in *Story*. Reflecting on Margaret Fuller, the pioneering American feminist who died in 1850, James wonders 'how, possibly, in our own luminous age, she would have affected us on the stage of the "world," or as a candidate, if we may so put it, for the cosmopolite crown'.[86] Combining the ubiquitous Shakespearean world-as-stage metaphor with the novel image of the 'cosmopolite crown', James alludes to Ibsen's success in making both feminism and literary cosmopolitanism public and fashionable in the 1880s and 1890s. If Fuller seems a prototype of James's fictional heroines, James also considers her retrospectively in the light ('our own luminous age') of enlightened and enlightening Ibsen, who had put women in Fuller's image literally centre stage.

In spite of this, *When We Dead Awaken* shows Ibsen's ultimate sense of cosmopolitanism's limitations. Irene, the play's pivotal figure, is symbolically a provincial turned cosmopolitan. First heard to speak with 'a little north-country accent',[87] she claims to have 'travelled in many lands', and that her first husband was 'a South American' and '[a] distinguished diplomatist', whilst her second husband is 'a Russian' who lives '[f]ar away in the Ural Mountains'.[88] She admits to Rubek that she followed him 'out into the wide world'[89] as his muse and model. Irene's madness shows how restlessness is endemic to the human condition, not merely a result of cultural strictures as earlier plays such as *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler* suggest. Indeed, cosmopolitanism in action manifests itself as a kind of restlessness as well as a cultivated attitude. In bringing about her own and Rubek's deaths in a bid for freedom, Irene drastically imagines that freedom is achieved neither by accepting the arbitrariness of the world nor by criss-crossing it, but by rejecting it. Ostensibly, she decides to 'follow' Rubek 'gladly, my lord and master' (as she had earlier done), but in fact she and Rubek follow the 'sun',[90] that recurring Ibsenian symbol of the ever-desired but unattainable better life purged of petrifying, deadening, mere existence.

This distinction between existence and life is perhaps why James makes us notice, above all, the transformative experience of reading or watching an Ibsen play. Frank Kermode, referring to W. B. Yeats's cosmopolitan-inflected 1927 poem 'Sailing to Byzantium', observes that '"the artifice of eternity" is a striking periphrasis for "form," for the shapes which console the

[86] James, *William Wetmore Story*, i.127.
[87] Ibsen, *Eyolf, Borkman, Dead* (Archer), 349.
[88] Ibsen, *Eyolf, Borkman, Dead* (Archer), 363, 364, 365.
[89] Ibsen, *Eyolf, Borkman, Dead* (Archer), 369.
[90] Ibsen, *Eyolf, Borkman, Dead* (Archer), 455.

dying generations'.[91] James was 'console[d]' by Ibsen in this way: Ibsen's 'shapes' deceived time at a point in his life when James was particularly conscious of ageing and cultural change. But Ibsen's 'shapes' are also ascribed power by James: they transform the provincial into the urbane, the particular into the universal, impressing upon us and imputing to us the same border-crossing power.

iv. 'Towards larger aims and higher tasks': Ibsen as a pragmatic cosmopolitan

Ibsen emerges from James's rigorous analysis, and his own self-analysis, as a migratory citizen of the world, but one who, like Diogenes, is not thereby 'happy' in any conventional, and certainly not in an unqualified, sense. He is at home nowhere. The country of his birth is not his homeland; neither are Italy or Germany, England or America, France or Ireland, Sweden or Denmark, his homes, except insofar as he has won admirers and transmitters of his work in those countries. His admirers, gathered around him at a banquet in Oslo for the occasion of his seventieth birthday (the biblical three-score years and ten), form his truest centre. Having been an enemy of the people in the early 1880s, by the late 1890s, he confesses, he has become the focus of a range of opinion that he cherishes for the common interest it shares in his own aspirations:

> For *here* [Ibsen's emphasis] I behold something that resembles an agreement. *Here* all views, all diverging opinions have been able to gather about one and the same thing. I have here no longer the painful feeling of being regarded as the poet of a party, either of the one or of the other. His entire people a poet must have around him—either in adherence or in opposition. And then the idea of unity will go further towards larger aims and higher tasks.—That is my hope and my belief.[92]

The Oslo banquet is Ibsen's home in microcosm: a spectrum of opinion disagreeing about his meaning, purpose, and interpretability in performance, but agreed in its attachment to his work. To an eager Norwegian audience, Ibsen thus painted himself as a stealthily (rather than staunchly) cosmopolitan writer. The same audience, however, he felt had been apt to assume he had attained 'unqualified happiness' through achieving international fame. But Ibsen was not going to be content simply with fame and recognition of his work, for he was not preaching a gospel and did not have *idées fixes*. Symons, from his vantage point as a habitual London theatregoer, sensed the essentially open-ended, non-didactic nature of Ibsen's art

[91] Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*, 3.
[92] Ibsen, *Speeches and New Letters*, 60.

early on, claiming that Ibsen's 'plays are no party-pamphlets, but a gospel of real light: they illuminate, they do not merely argue.'[93]

The image of light, which Oswald and Mrs Alving connect with 'the joy of life' in *Ghosts*, was central to Ibsen's thought. As an aspect of his cosmopolitanism it has been overlooked, perhaps because of its association with what Symons (again, presciently) saw as the then-current misconception of Ibsen as 'an idealist […] an unpractical visionary', replacing accepted ideals with vague substitutes.[94] Ibsen's famous description of his 1864 journey south of the Alps, given in Copenhagen at another seventieth birthday banquet, also bears analysis based on the distinction between 'the joy of life' and 'true, inward happiness':

> On the high mountains the clouds hung like great dark curtains, and underneath these and through the tunnel we rode until we suddenly found ourselves at Miramare, where the beauty of the South, a wonderfully bright gleam, shining like white marble, suddenly revealed itself to me and placed its stamp on my whole later production, even though not all in it was a thing of beauty.
>
> This feeling of having escaped from the darkness into the light, from the mists through a tunnel out into the sunshine, that feeling I again experienced when the other morning I gazed the length of the Sound. And then I found here the trusty Danish eyes. It seemed to me that these two journeys acquired an inner connection, and for this I give you most cordial thanks.[95]

If the emergence from the tunnel into the light is an obvious image of rebirth, Ibsen's first journey to Italy as he describes it here is also an apt symbol for 'the joy of life', or experience enjoyed for its own sake and conducive to a sense of artistic purpose. The second journey here described, a walk or train journey along the Sound, the strait separating Denmark and Sweden, is a symbol of 'true, inner happiness'. Although Ibsen claims that the earlier feeling was simply repeated thirty-four years later, the repetition is obviously qualified, not only by the quite different place (quite the reverse of the shining South), but by the 'trusty Danish eyes' that soon followed it, and by the 'inner connection' between the one experience and the memory of its precursor. Long before Marcel Proust, Ibsen describes an involuntary memory that, by placing experience outside linear time, generates a glimmer of the sought-after 'true, inner happiness'.

This is a subtly cosmopolitan conception of personal history: a sensory experience, in the first instance dependent on the particulars of place for generating its intensity, much later effaces

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[93] Symons, 'From "Henrik Ibsen" (1889)', 129.
[94] Symons, 'From "Henrik Ibsen" (1889)', 129. He goes on: '[Ibsen] is directly and steadily practical, full of common sense, shrewdness, attention to fact, to detail' (129).
[95] Ibsen, *Speeches and New Letters*, 61.

the particularity of place – and the linearity of time – by its sudden repetition somewhere objectively different. Similarly, Ibsen's return to Norway was a focus for his critical internationalization as much as for his personal repatriation; the importance of places *as particular* is effaced on Ibsen's return to Norway, where he finds that it is the discussion of ideas that binds places together into something approaching a coherent whole. Ibsen has 'beh[e]ld something that resembles an agreement' at the banquet in Oslo: the setting is only a convenient receptacle for his 'idea of unity'. Only coherence between places – a coherence awakened involuntarily by repeated experience, and by a sense of disparate opinion united in a particular task, however vague – can show what it means to be a cosmopolitan writer not quite at home anywhere. Ibsen played to crowds, both in person at the banquet speeches and more widely through the medium of the plays, but he never sought to align himself with the most popular or predominant view.

Symons in 1889 noticed how Ibsen presents 'life, and yet life from a point of view which is not the point of view of the crowd'.[96] Ibsen was not populist, clearly, but he consciously played to the crowd. Michael Meyer notes how 'like a preacher, a Savonarola or a Wesley, [Ibsen] wrought his effect most powerfully on crowds, gathered together not in a market place or a church or chapel, but in a theatre.'[97] Unlike Savonarola or Wesley, however, Ibsen does not have a new gospel, only a newly galvanized medium: the prose drama in realistic settings for both page and stage. Crowds, for Ibsen, are a microcosm of the world in its unpredictability, often in disarray but sometimes in agreement or, ideally, engaged in constructive argument. A spectrum of opinion on any social question or body of art is inevitable, he sensed, but 'the idea of unity' can only have credence where differences of interpretation are admitted and guided towards 'larger aims and higher tasks'. Cosmopolitanism thus means a practical movement towards 'the idea of unity', rather than the fulfilment of that unity itself (an impossible ideal). In this sense, Ibsen is prophetic: Shaw was correct to claim that Ibsen 'is on the side of the prophets [of history] in having devoted himself to shewing that the spirit or will of Man is constantly outgrowing the ideals, and that therefore thoughtless conformity to them is constantly producing results no less tragic than those which follow thoughtless violations of them.'[98] One such ideal is the cosmopolitan ideal: for Ibsen, by 1898, true cultural or political 'unity' – world culture or world government – cannot be realized in practice but should still be aimed for in theory.

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[96] Symons, 'From "Henrik Ibsen" (1889)', 130.
[97] Meyer, *Ibsen*, 864.
[98] Shaw, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, 166.

The idea of history is therefore essential to Ibsen's late, anti-idealist cosmopolitanism as expressed in his Oslo and Copenhagen speeches. However much his later plays appear internally to endorse the rejection of the poisonous, contagious past, such rejection amounts to the rejection of personal, family history, something that Ibsen does not endorse. In wider historiographical terms, Ibsen – to judge by his late, public self-analysis – is more of a Whiggish optimist carrying the past with him than a revolutionary leaving the shackles of the *ancien régime* behind. In the foreword to a collected edition of his works in 1898, Ibsen tells the reader that '[o]nly by grasping and absorbing my entire output as a consistent whole can one be aware of the precise impression I meant to convey by the individual parts.'[99] At any rate as far as art is concerned, the past is not to be rejected, but seen in concordance with the present as a basis for 'the idea of unity'. The only way in which we are legitimate citizens of the world, for Ibsen, is if we assume provisionally that the universal can be grasped *in historical terms*, in order to understand better the resonance of the particulars of time and place with which we find ourselves confronted.

Ibsen's public distinction between 'the joy of life' and 'true, inward happiness' therefore turns on a cosmopolitanism understood in historical and pragmatic terms: the disconcerting feeling of being at home nowhere is ultimately compensated for by a collaborative, historical effort to unify culture. These thoughts occur late to Ibsen; in *Peer Gynt* (1867), as we have seen, he is still working them out. In spite of this early, poetic play's surreal elements, so different from the realism of the later plays, it tests and parodies two versions of cosmopolitanism, idealistic and pragmatic, finding in Gynt an ironic model of the world citizen made self-consciously cosmopolitan by experience that takes him beyond, but ultimately (as with Ibsen) returns him to, his provincial background.

The ramifications of cosmopolitanism in the early years of the twentieth century, although Ibsen did not prophesy them, are explored in Archer's 1912 essay, *The Great Analysis*, and Shaw's 1913 second edition of *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. These two works, though didactic and polemical, demonstrate the endurance of Ibsen's disguised, anti-idealist, 'provincial' cosmopolitanism before 1914; they also demonstrate the beginning of its fragmentation. Ibsen's afterlife in this very particular respect has not been studied, and the idea of history is essential to Ibsen's posthumous reception in the years leading up to the First World War.

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[99] Quoted in James MacFarlane (ed.), *Henrik Ibsen: The Critical Heritage* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), 171.

v. Ibsen, *The Great Analysis*, and cosmopolitanism in the early twentieth century

By 1913, as we have seen, Henry James was made fully aware by Ibsen's drama of the world's immeasurability and of the dangers of an overambitious and non-empirical cosmopolitanism which, although ostensibly advocating a world culture (Hendrik Andersen's 'World City' being one example), in reality disguises competing and potentially belligerent nationalisms. In a different sense, Shaw found that the world was immeasurable in abstract terms, and by the same date was of the firm opinion, published in 'The Case for Equality' (1913), that 'human equality' 'can mean only one thing: it means equality of income.'[100] In 1912, a polemical book, *The Great Analysis: A Plea for a Rational World-Order*, was anonymously published in both London and New York with an admiring preface by the classicist Gilbert Murray. William Archer was the polemic's author.[101] In the book, Archer supports Shavian socialism in identifying 'the one great problem – neither national nor international, but fundamental – of the distribution of wealth', arguing presciently (in view of the looming European crisis) that 'the profits of war go to widen the gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots."'[102] Cosmopolitanism, commercialized and vulgarized to an unprecedented degree, had become uneasily moored to what Thomas Carlyle called the dismal science of economics as well as to what Friedrich Nietzsche called the gay science of

[100] George Bernard Shaw, *The Socialism of Shaw*, edited, with introduction, by James Fuchs (New York: Vanguard Press, 1926), 49.

[101] Archer's authorship of *The Great Analysis* has been verified by his biographer (see Peter Whitebrook, *William Archer: A Biography* [London: Methuen, 1993], 307). Archer's authorship is further supported, as I show in this section, by its philosophical applicability and indebtedness to his translations of Ibsen, with their 'provincial cosmopolitanism', and by other circumstantial evidence such as Archer's letters to and from Gilbert Murray (Gilbert Murray papers, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS. Gilbert Murray adds. 4.). A posthumous reprint names Archer as the book's author (William Archer, *The Great Analysis: A Plea for a Rational World-Order*, with an introduction by Gilbert Murray [London: Williams & Norgate, 1931]), though Murray's preface is unaltered and does not speculate on the reason(s) for Archer's anonymity. In a pre-publication letter to Murray, however, Archer claims to 'feel quite strongly that my name would do [the book] no good & that the best chance of its attracting attention would precisely be to keep the secret of the authorship' (letter from William Archer to Gilbert Murray, 13 March 1912, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS. Gilbert Murray adds. 4.,p. 82). Murray had read a first draft of *The Great Analysis* in 1911 ('I like your World Order' [letter from Gilbert Murray to William Archer, 9 October 1911, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS. Gilbert Murray adds. 4., p. 62]), offering only minor criticisms to which Archer responded, 'I am taking account of your criticisms, except the one about "pan-mixture" which is no word of mine. It is quoted from M. Jean Tinot, whoever he may be' (letter from William Archer to Gilbert Murray, 13 March 1912, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS. Gilbert Murray adds. 4., p. 64). (Archer does not cite Tinot, who remains unidentifiable, nor does he cite Israel Zangwill when he uses the word 'melting-pot' synonymously with 'pan-mixture' in the same sentence [*The Great Analysis*, 65]). In any event, the book fell into an obscurity from which, despite the 1931 reprint, it has not recovered, and its philosophical connection to Archer's translations of Ibsen has been entirely overlooked.

[102] William Archer, *The Great Analysis: A Plea for a Rational World-Order*, with a preface by Gilbert Murray (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), 105.

poetry. Given this development, for Shaw and Archer the cosmopolitanized world now had to live up to the creed of human equality.

Like Peer Gynt, Archer was interested in synthesizing experience into rational order. He noted a perceived division in German culture between the morally idealist, provincial German who was thought to have existed before the 1870 Franco-Prussian war, and the amoral, anti-idealist, cosmopolitan German of the post-1870 German Empire. Archer therefore associated modern cosmopolitanism, paradoxically, with Prussian chauvinism, though he also denied that the pre-war German was therefore superior:

> I am not assuming (as some people do) that the dreamy, idealistic, provincial, ante-bellum German was a happy or a better man than the hustling, aggressive, cosmopolitan German of to-day. The idealist, in so far as he existed at all, was probably doomed to go under the mere march of human affairs, war or no war. What I do suggest is that investigation might show that, for the mass of the German people, the stress and strain of life [before 1870] had increased out of all proportion to any increase in its interest, pleasure, or comfort,—in short, in either its spiritual or its animal satisfactions.[103]

Surprisingly, given *Peer Gynt*'s dramatization, endorsed by Archer's translation, of the pre-1870 German (Eberkopf) as idealistically cosmopolitan, rather than either idealistically provincial or anti-idealistically cosmopolitan, Archer by 1912 had come to regard German cosmopolitanism as something based on pragmatic self-assertion and capitalist enterprise.

Ibsen's Peer Gynt is in this sense a prototype of a certain kind of modern, twentieth-century cosmopolite, rather than a relic of pre-1870 idealistic provincialism. By 1912, Archer, like Henry James, had come to see cosmopolitanism as something fundamentally flawed. Unlike the empiricist James, however, Archer retained a rationalist faith in a coherent world order. Ibsen, like Archer, saw in the Franco-German war both a vindication of German efficiency – though Archer admits 'the war was a product of the efficiency'[104] – and a precursor of a new kind of chauvinist cosmopolitanism, riding the tide of history and forcing the world into a greater collective awareness.

Just as Archer criticized the 'hustling, aggressive, cosmopolitan German of to-day' reaping the rewards of the prosperous German Empire, Shaw, in his essay 'Socialism for Millionaires' (1896), criticized the 'typical modern proprietor', 'the cosmopolitan

[103] Archer, *The Great Analysis*, 101.
[104] Archer, *The Great Analysis*, 102.

shareholder' who is 'an absentee as a matter of course.'[105] Even James, who was no overt critic of capitalism, drily observed, in the early summer of 1904 in a newly cosmopolitan New York, how '[t]he season was over, the recipients of income had retired for the summer, and the large clear vistas were peopled mainly with that conscious hush and that spectral animation characteristic of places kept, as with all command of time and space, for the indifferent, the all but insolent, absentee.'[106] Cosmopolitanism in the early twentieth century was therefore connected by three of the most prominent and prolific English-speaking Ibsenists, William Archer, George Bernard Shaw, and Henry James, with rampant capitalism, *rentier* absenteeism, and the march of history threatening disaffection and war.

In 1922, after the great catastrophe, Shaw brought out a third edition of *Quintessence*. In a new preface, he audaciously claimed that '[h]ad that gospel of Ibsen been understood and heeded, these twenty millions [of First World War dead] might have been alive now; for the war was a war of ideals.'[107] Yet he did not alter the text of the 1913 second edition, since he accepted that Ibsen, who died in 1906, could not be interpreted 'in the light of a catastrophe of which he was unaware. Nobody can pretend to say what view he would have taken of [the Great War].'[108] As we have seen, Ibsen's immediate response to the 1870 Franco-Prussian war was, by his own admission, to alter his 'view of the world and history and human life' from 'national' to 'tribal', meaning from Norwegian nationalist to pan-Scandinavian or pan-Germanic. However, his attendance at the 1873 World's Fair in Vienna, capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, sitting 'on the jury for painting and sculpture, representing both Norway and Denmark', opened Ibsen's eyes among other things to 'eastern European culture, art and applied art […] painters from Russia and Hungary'.[109] The world was becoming both more connected and more capacious: the horizon was still expanding, and tribalism was not quite enough. It could never have occurred to Ibsen that only eight years after his death, a world war between an alliance of Germany and Austria-Hungary on the one side, and Great Britain, France, Italy, Russia (and later the United States) on the other, would wreak havoc on an entire generation.

Yet for Shaw, Ibsen was unconsciously prophetic of the future. 'It is not too much to say', he wrote in 1913, 'that the works of Ibsen furnish one of the best modern keys to the prophecies

[105] Shaw, *The Socialism of Shaw*, 91.
[106] James, *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*, 506.
[107] Shaw, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, vii.
[108] Shaw, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, ix.
[109] Figueiredo, *Henrik Ibsen*, 331.

of Scripture.'[110] This understanding of Ibsen's prescience, and of the interconnectedness of nations with a world of commercial, social, and sexual agitation, was reflected in contemporary journalistic observation. London in 1913 was described by one observer as 'a permanent world's fair'.[111] It has been claimed that 'the [feminist] movement of opinion launched by visionaries like Mary Wollstonecraft and Ibsen had finally come to fruition in the first decade of the twentieth century'[112] (some years later, that is, than the first performances of Ibsen's sociological plays). Whilst Shaw admitted that 'it may be that into this new atmosphere [of 1913] my book will come with quite an old-fashioned air',[113] he found in contemporary dramatic criticism 'the same pettish disappointment at the absence of the old conventions, the same gaping unconsciousness of the meaning and purpose of the warfare in which each play is a battle, as in the days when this book was new.'[114] Max Beerbohm, despite feeling with 'an awful suddenness', as early as 1902, that 'Ibsen is old-fashioned', nevertheless predicted that 'Ellida [Wangel] and the rest, creatures of yesterday, will grow gradually younger, and will doubtless be much admired at the close of the [twentieth] century'.[115] Ibsen was at once out of date and eternally young, a paradox that rests in part on the cosmopolitan potential of his plays, specifically their susceptibility to continual reinterpretation in the light of a more urgently agitated and internationalized world.

Archer could not have foreseen the full horror of the Great War – man-made, technological, politically futile – any more than Ibsen or Shaw, a fact that makes his *Great Analysis* both naïve and poignant. But its political philosophy, as I will show, relates directly to Ibsen's drama. In an earlier, far more contentious work published under his own name and dedicated to H. G. Wells, Archer continued a tradition of sociological travel books that included Wells's *The Future in America* (1905) and James's *The American Scene* (1907). *Through Afro-America: An English Reading of the Race Problem* (1910) sees African-Americans' plight in the United States as indicative of the futility of what Herr Klesmer in Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (as we have seen) 'look[s] forward to' as 'a fusion of races'. '[A]n obliteration of all race-boundaries in a universal "pan-mixture" [Israel Zangwill had popularised the synonymous term 'melting-pot' in a 1908 play] Archer 'cannot believe […] is a true ideal of

[110] Shaw, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, xiv.
[111] Quoted in Charles Emmerson, *1913: The World Before the Great War* (London: The Bodley Head, 2013), 15.
[112] Jean-Michel Rabaté, *1913: The Cradle of Modernism* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 83.
[113] Shaw, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, xiv.
[114] Shaw, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, xix.
[115] Quoted in Meyer, *Ibsen*, 866-867.

progress; nor does it seem to me that the world at large is verging in that direction.'[116] Archer's undoubted condescension towards African-Americans in *Through Afro-America*, and his scepticism about the 'obliteration of race-boundaries', should not blind us to his view, as revealed in *The Great Analysis*, of a world which, like that dramatized in Ibsen's plays, is at once self-contained and microcosmic, self-referential and synecdochically representative of the wider world. Ibsen's English translator, writing tentatively and anonymously, gestates the idealist-cum-pragmatist cosmopolitan yearnings of Ibsen's characters and moulds them into a political tract.

Archer's 'great analysis' is based on a hypothetical Wellsian scenario. With ironic and deliberate provincialism, he imagines the county of Yorkshire transported into space to become 'a second satellite, between the moon and the earth'.[117] Archer notes, sidestepping the premise of *Through Afro-America*, that '[o]ne of the smaller among the United States might equally well serve the purpose of this illustration. We might take the State [*sic*] of Massachusetts, for example […] The main difference would lie in the fact that the population of Massachusetts would not be so homogeneous as that of Yorkshire, so that certain race-problems might have to be encountered.'[118] Yet the great human 'problem' that would arise from this scenario, he conjectures, 'would be neither interracial, nor international, nor military, nor religious: it would be simply social and economic. Which means, fundamentally, it would be a problem of economics alone, but of economics viewed, not as the science of wealth, but as the science of well-being'; in other words, 'what are the best interests of the community'.[119]

Sidestepping the Zangwillian melting-pot, and prioritizing economics as the key to human affairs, Archer then indulges in the Forsterian idea of a vast machine organizing human life: 'Is it inconceivable that some encyclopaedic brain (with lesser intelligences working under its inspiration and control) should one day disentangle and master all the welter of terrestrial resources and potentialities, as we have supposed the Organizing Body to master and manipulate the resources and potentialities of our insulated Yorkshire?'[120] Yet he claims, as if taking his cue from Ibsen, that 'we have as yet overlooked the spiritual significance of the

[116] William Archer, *Through Afro-America: An English Study of the Race Problem* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1910), xi.
[117] Archer, *The Great Analysis*, 4.
[118] Archer, *The Great Analysis*, 4.
[119] Archer, *The Great Analysis*, 23-25.
[120] Archer, *The Great Analysis*, 38-39. E. M. Forster published his anti-Wellsian science-fiction tale, 'The Machine Stops', in 1909.

great fact that we now know, in its whole extent, the planet we live in, and can, and must, turn our attention to intensive knowledge and mastery of it.'[121] He expresses a wish that 'all intelligent human beings' should 'learn to think planetarily'.[122]

In spite of his globalism, Archer's analysis of the Franco-German war in the same book, as we have seen, divided Germans, at least for the sake of argument, into pre-1870 idealist provincials and post-1870 pragmatic cosmopolitans. If his book combines the naïveté of idealism with a naïve pragmatism, and if his case study of a new society (Yorkshire separated from Planet Earth) is deliberately provincial, Archer is also cosmopolitan in a sense he did not attribute to the term: he is a citizen of the world who wants to think in terms of the world as a whole. He explicitly warns against 'that tribal vanity which, under the name of patriotism, works far more insidious mischief than personal conceit', claiming that '[t]he sooner we see our way (however roughly outlined) to a rational world-order, the more chance is there of preventing a catastrophic swing of the pendulum [back to chaos]'.[123]

Ibsen did not make such grand claims, but he was aware of the dangers of excessive rationalism as well as excessive idealism. Indeed, Archer's image of 'a professor, by ascending the watch-tower of Science', who 'may be able to see a little further into the future than the astutest *Real-Politiker*',[124] is an unconscious cross between Eilert Lövborg of *Hedda Gabler* and Halvard Solness of *The Master Builder*, both victims of excessive scientism (the science of history and the science of architecture, respectively) as well as, in Solness' case, futile idealism. Like James, Ibsen would have considered Archer's thesis presumptuous, torn as it is between a sociological desire to improve material conditions for humanity by acquiring more comprehensive data, and a personal desire to uplift people's lives in an unquantifiable spiritual sense. Yet he would have sympathized with the Ibsenism of this quandary, if Ibsenism is taken to mean not Shaw's understanding that there is no formula, but an understanding that all universal formulae are at once admirable and impractical.

Archer admits that 'as for the avoidance [in his thesis] of the word "Socialism," it has, for the most part, been instinctive, not deliberate', partly because it is 'a word which does not mean the same thing to any two people who use it.'[125] Yet with the single exception quoted above,

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[121] Archer, *The Great Analysis*, 56.
[122] Archer, *The\ Great Analysis*, 59.
[123] Archer, *The Great Analysis*, 104, 107, 122.
[124] Archer, *The Great Analysis*, 115-116.
[125] Archer, *The Great Analysis*, 122. Anne Fernihough quotes a contributor to a 1908 number of the socialist magazine *New Age* who, confused about socialism's meaning, asks, '"[…] Will you blue-book, or will you

he also avoids, instinctively or deliberately, the words 'cosmopolitan' and 'cosmopolitanism'. This is despite his thesis having a cosmopolitan underpinning in the sense that it claims 'all intelligent human beings' must think of themselves as world citizens now that the world has become comprehensively mapped and greatly interconnected. Evidently, Archer means in his single use of the word 'cosmopolitan' something insidious and vague, applicable only to pragmatic, self-interested, bourgeois individuals such as the class in Germany who benefited from the Franco-German war. Its wider meaning, however, is obscured. Archer represses the term except to use it mockingly and in passing (Ibsen's use of the word in *Peer Gynt* is mocking, but there is no sense of insidiousness, since for Gynt cosmopolitanism is a pose rather than a marker of class). This repression can only be attributed to the word's negative connotations in 1912. In 1898, Ibsen told the Norwegian Association for Women's Rights, which had been founded in 1884, that 'although it is desirable to solve to problem of women's rights, along with the others, […] that has not been my whole purpose. My task has been the *description of humanity*.'[126] Similarly, Archer was concerned in his thesis not to solve the problem of world order but to describe it; the word 'cosmopolitan', introduced to describe his own thinking, would sound at once too idealistic, implying a Diogenes-like detachment or Platonic utopianism, and too elitist, connoting the vulgar excesses of modern international capitalism.

What ties the twentieth-century Shaw and Archer to the *fin-de-siècle* Ibsen is an understanding that the historical process – the idea of history applied to social and economic problems – must be the engine of a new, pragmatized cosmopolitanism. Such an understanding begins, in Ibsen's *oeuvre*, with *Hedda Gabler*. Tesman's approach to history (he is an academic historian) is obscurantist, deliberately provincial, and entirely at odds with Hedda's intellectual instincts. Archer notes that Ibsen's 'favourite retrospective method' – his characters' references to past events in their lives – is something 'from which in *Hedda Gabler* he had in great measure departed.'[127] Except for references to the Tesmans' honeymoon, the only 'retrospect' in *Hedda Gabler* is the dispassionate retrospect of Tesman's academic studies, which concern 'the domestic industries of Brabant during the Middle Ages'.[128] This is a subject of little interest to Hedda, whose thoughts tend towards the present and the future: 'To hear nothing but the history of civilisation, morning, noon,

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dance?" There could hardly be a clearer expression of the divergent routes socialism was taking at this time' (Fernihough, *Freewomen and Supermen*, 70-71).

[126] Ibsen, *Speeches and New Letters*, 65.

[127] Ibsen, *Hedda, Master Builder* (Archer), xxvii.

[128] Ibsen, *Hedda, Master Builder* (Archer), 18.

midnight—' […] 'and then all this about the domestic industry of the middle ages—! That's the most disgusting part of it!'[129] Hedda would prefer Jorgen 'to go into politics', ostensibly because she is 'bored', but also because she intuits that history must be seen in relation to present-day politics, in particular to the alleviation of what, with reference to her own case, she calls 'genteel poverty'.[130] Hedda, the quintessential *fin-de-siècle* heroine, is a futurist as well as an aesthete: she presages the concerns of Shaw and Archer in 1912 and 1913, and her restlessness is closely linked to a new conception of history derived from a sense of world citizenship.

This new conception of history is advanced by Eilert Lövborg, Tesman's colleague and Hedda's former *paramour*, whose new book, still a work in progress, dismays Tesman:

> TESMAN. Why, my dear Eilert—does it [the book] not come down to our own days?
>
> LÖVBORG. Yes, it does; and this one deals with the future.
>
> TESMAN. With the future! But, good heavens, we know nothing of the future!
>
> LÖVBORG. No; but there is a thing or two to be said about it all the same. [*Opens the packet.*] Look here—
>
> TESMAN. Why, that's not your handwriting.
>
> LÖVBORG. I dictated it. [Turning over the pages.] It falls into two sections. The first deals with the civilising forces of the future. And here is the second—[running through the pages towards the end]—forecasting the probable line of development.
>
> TESMAN. How odd now! I should never have thought of writing anything of that sort.
>
> HEDDA. [*At the glass door, drumming on the pane*.] H'm—. I daresay not.[131]

Eilert's book is the kind of book that, in the Anglophone world, would come to be written in the 1900s and early 1910s: James's *The American Scene* and Wells's *The Future in America* as well as Archer's *Great Analysis* and Shaw's revised *Quintessence*. All these books were influenced by what R. G. Collingwood identified as 'positivistic historiography', a late nineteenth-century idea of history in which 'the new science of sociology' played a leading role and 'the methods of natural science were applicable to the interpretation of history.'[132]

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[129] Ibsen, *Hedda, Master Builder* (Archer), 68.
[130] Ibsen, *Hedda, Master Builder* (Archer), 79-80.
[131] Ibsen, *Hedda, Master Builder* (Archer), 87-88.
[132] Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, 127-128.

If history is understood as having a direct bearing on the present and the future, then its study, however 'positivistic', is the engine of cosmopolitanism at the beginning of the twentieth century. But Ibsen should not himself be read as a historian or philosopher. Archer considered Ibsen's true significance in an article for the journal *Cosmopolitan* in 1905 (the year William Randolph Hearst – archetypal Gilded Age cosmopolite – purchased the magazine), entitled 'Henrik Ibsen: Philosopher or Poet?' For Archer, Ibsen is 'a great poet' and 'also, no doubt, a moralist, with a high ideal of human character', yet he has 'no definite, consistent, clearly thought-out moral or social system to inculcate.'[133] If Ibsen has no system, his plays nevertheless dramatize the search for that system, and the search as often as not consists, as I have shown, in a vision of cosmopolitanism. It was a vision that Archer denied was ever a preoccupation of Ibsen's, even as the former faced it directly. In another, more personal biographical article, 'Ibsen As I Knew Him' (1906), Archer described Ibsen's residence in Italy in the 1880s:

> Almost every afternoon he sallied forth from his flat and walked […] to the Caffè Nazionale [an ironic name given its international crowd] […] The dim blue eyes, at such times, saw nothing of the cosmopolitan crowd in the glittering café, but were fixed, or am I much mistaken, upon far-off Norway and its grey "provincial" life—saw the mob breaking Stockmann's windows, or little Hedvig slipping, pistol in hand, into the garret where the Wild Duck lived.[134]

Archer's self-qualification ('or am I much mistaken'), and his quotation marks around 'provincial', suggest a nagging sense of the false dichotomy, in Ibsen's plays, of 'cosmopolitan' and 'provincial'. It would be more acute, Archer senses, to say that the 'cosmopolitan crowd' themselves reflected the Norwegian characters; that they too could be 'the mob breaking Stockmann's windows', and that Ibsen needed to see his 'provincial' characters precisely in the light of continental Europe, cosmopolitan café culture, and the great centres of world history. The fact that Archer applies the word 'cosmopolitan' to a crowd and not a detached individual suggests that it describes nationally mixed groups as well as polyglot, peripatetic individuals. Ibsen does not advocate cosmopolitanism, for Archer, so much as dramatize its potential in the minds of 'provincial' characters.

Archer claimed that Ibsen was not writing for a 'cosmopolitan' audience even during his years of fame. In an essay on *Rosmersholm* written after Ibsen's death, Archer criticizes Georg Brandes as 'certainly mistaken in declaring that there is no such "castle" as

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[133] William Archer, *William Archer on Ibsen: The Major Essays, 1889-1919*, edited by Thomas Postlewait (London: Greenwood Press, 1984), 82.
[134] Archer, *William Archer on Ibsen*, 113.

Rosmersholm in Norway, and thence arguing that Ibsen had begun to write for a cosmopolitan rather than a Norwegian audience.'[135] But the fact that in *Rosmersholm* Ibsen writes about a social class and a style of architecture particular to Norway in no way lessens the play's impact in demonstrating the provincial cosmopolitanism that runs throughout Archer's translations. *Rosmersholm*, nominally translated by Archer's brother Charles under the former's editorial supervision, is imprecise about the architecture of the eponymous house. It is therefore both recognisable to Norwegians on a local level and comprehensible to foreign or 'cosmopolitan' audiences in terms of the generic quasi-feudal social arrangement against which Rosmer and Rebecca West chafe. It is not the landowner, Rosmer, but Rector Kroll whose social function Archer takes the trouble to explain to his readers: '"Rector", Archer footnotes, 'in the Scotch and Continental sense of head-master of a school, not in the English sense of a beneficed clergyman.'[136] Once more, therefore, Archer gives the impression ('certainly mistaken') of protesting too much in disclaiming the importance of the idea of the 'cosmopolitan' – specifically, the idea of a cosmopolitan audience – to Ibsen's thought. Just as Ibsen's *milieu* when writing the social dramas was necessarily cosmopolitan, so the audiences who watched his plays in performance were cosmopolitan by the time he began to write *Rosmersholm* in Munich in 1886, as he and Archer both knew.

[135] Archer, *William Archer on Ibsen*, 242. Archer claims that 'Rosmersholm is not a castle at all; and old houses such as Ibsen describes are far from uncommon' (242).
[136] Ibsen, *Rosmersholm, Lady, Hedda* (Archer), [2]. Rosmer, to add to the confusion, is a 'retired parish clergyman' ([2]).

Conclusion: provincial cosmopolitanism as a literary genealogy

In tracing a path through George Eliot, Henry James, and William Archer's Henrik Ibsen, and in particular bringing to the fore what I call their 'provincial cosmopolitanism', I have sought both to return to a sense of character and life – in the words of John Schad, 'to come *back* to life [after literary theory] […]'[1] – and to trace, without Leavis's ideological narrowness, the genealogy of an intellectual tradition, namely the understanding of cosmopolitanism in relation to provincial settings and historical consciousness. In addition to Eliot and James considered as novelists, the James-Ibsen amalgamation gives my genealogy a theatrical dimension; but this dimension is one that enfolds Ibsen within English literature in the sense that Ibsen influenced 'late' James, in his prose as well as in his own attempts at drama, and not *vice versa*. It also encompasses Ibsen in the sense that Archer's Ibsen was and is a text, or body of texts, to be read like a novel or novel series, as much as a vehicle for presentation and interpretation in performance. In considering 'late' James, Leavis notes 'that notorious dividing phase, [James's] sustained and frustrate attempt upon the theatre [in 1895]',[2] without observing Ibsen's profound significance in creating that 'dividing phase'.

George Eliot, Henry James, and Henrik Ibsen each fashion what Kirsten Shepherd-Barr, with reference to Ibsen, has called 'a broad, cosmopolitan, specifically modern outlook' in relation to literature's function.[3] Eliot in the historical novel, James in the contemporary novel, and Ibsen in the historical and contemporary drama, show that texts function as means by which this modern outlook can be tied to provincial settings, remote in time or obscure in location, rather than exclusively and inevitably to the great modern metropolises out of which, misleadingly, the stereotype of cosmopolitan detachment originates. Stefano Evangelista cites Fulsås and Rem's argument that 'Ibsen's phenomenal success showed that the supposedly provincial identity of Scandinavian writers could be turned into a vantage position',[4] but theirs is an argument about Ibsen's interpretative reception rather than his intention. A strand of 'provincial cosmopolitanism' is woven into Archer's translations, and as such is traceable to Ibsen himself, for whom history is symbolic of the welding together of the provincial and the cosmopolitan, and 'the joy of life' symbolic of the cosmopolitan aspiration of provincial lives. Eliot and James, moreover, specifically ground their cosmopolitanism in 'provincial

[1] Michael Payne and John Schad (eds), *Life After Theory* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 168.
[2] Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, 162.
[3] Kirsten Shepherd-Barr, *Ibsen and Early Modernist Theatre, 1890-1900* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1997), 4.
[4] Stefano Evangelista, *Literary Cosmopolitanism in the English Fin-de-Siècle: Citizens of Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 150.

life' (Eliot's catchphrase) and in a vision of history as reducible to the testimony of the individual, a 'sense of the past' (James's catchphrase) that is essential to the condition of both accidental and self-fashioned 'cosmopolite' characters. In the work of each writer, I hope to have shown, there exists a counter to the 'unhealthily skinny ethical abstraction' identified by Bruce Robbins: in the form of the historical novel expressing the very historical consciousness its anti-heroic characters lack (*Romola*); the proto-cosmopolite playing with difference (*What Maisie Knew*); the accidental cosmopolite thrust into the modern world (*The Wings of the Dove*), or into the 'visitable past' (*The Sense of the Past*); the romantic drama (*Peer Gynt*); the world-historic drama (*Emperor and Galilean*); and the modern provincial setting (Ibsen's contemporary dramas). I have further argued that Archer's *The Great Analysis*, although primarily a work of sociology or 'positivistic historiography', is the non-fictional, polemical equivalent of the provincial cosmopolitanism of Ibsen's prose dramas.

This genealogy not only increases the 'awareness of the possibilities of life' that Leavis attributes to the Eliot-James-Conrad tradition of the English novel; it also makes that increased awareness inextricable from characterization (in Eliot, James, and Ibsen), narrative (in Eliot and James), and linguistic choice (in Eliot, James, and Archer's translations). Stefano Evangelista's description of Ibsen as 'phenomenal' (a common adjective in Ibsen studies) points towards the essence of this Eliot-James-Ibsen synthesis: the three writers portray in their characterization, and simultaneously impute to the reader, a disconcerting and fundamentally moving experience. Thomas Bender, bringing phenomenology to bear on our understanding of the cosmopolitan, concludes that 'experience reorients us to the world around us, whether in a small or large way. And that is the foundation of cosmopolitanism.'[5] Cosmopolitanism without experience, Eliot, James, and Ibsen concur, is too detached and de-historicized. Their common understanding of the fundamentally experiential, historical, and provincial nature of cosmopolitanism, which I have traced, is best expressed, finally, in Archer's translation of Ibsen's coinage, *Verdensborgerdomsforpagtning*: 'cosmopolitanisation'.

[5] Bender, 'The Cosmopolitan Experience and its Uses', 122.

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Copy of thesis abstract (1,000 words)

'Cosmopolitan' is a disputed term, one of praise and occasionally of abuse. The etymology (*kosmopolitês*; Greek, 'citizen of the world') carries an inbuilt tension between world (*kosmos*) and citizen or inhabitant of a city (*politês*). I argue in my thesis that this tension, as played out in the texts I have chosen to study, is not merely between the world and the citizen, but more specifically between the accident of circumstances and the personal instinct to conform and survive. To be a cosmopolite, then, can be an accident that is part of the inscrutable *cosmos*; yet it can also be a choice enacted by the urbane inhabitant of the *polis*.

Cosmopolitanism, I argue, appears in various 'strange places' in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature: it appears in provincial settings (Henrik Ibsen's prose dramas in William Archer's translations); it manifests itself in naïve or inexperienced characters (Henry James's fiction); and it surfaces at particular, remote historical moments (George Eliot's novel, *Romola*, set in Florence in the 1490s). What I call the 'cosmopolitan dilemma' in the literature of the period – the problem of how to reconcile accidental circumstances with the pressure to conform in an increasingly competitive and polymorphous modern world – is resolved, I argue, by what James calls the 'historic sense'. I have chosen to focus on Eliot,

James, and Ibsen as three writers who explore this dilemma in subtle and thought-provoking ways, portraying characters whose cosmopolitanism is implicit rather than explicit.

Bruce Robbins notes that in contemporary debates around cosmopolitanism, 'many blooming, fleshed out particulars' (or 'cosmopolitanisms') have replaced the 'unhealthily skinny ethical abstraction' traditionally attached to the idea. But these 'particulars' inevitably rest on the original 'abstraction', and in the long nineteenth century, cosmopolitanism was still a liberal ideal, a vision of life that appealed to a certain kind of political progressive. This ideal was not confined to the urban rich, however. As James noted of Anthony Trollope's novels, 'the emotions of a nursery-governess in Australia' could be just as interesting in regard to cosmopolitanism as 'the adventures of a depraved *femme du monde* in Paris or London.' I apply the same understanding to Eliot, James himself, and Ibsen. My project engages with Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment philosophers of history (Kant and Hegel), Romantic and post-Romantic cultural critics (Hazlitt and Arnold), and contemporary thinkers (Helen Small, Bruce Robbins, and Amanda Anderson).

Henry James thought *Romola* (1863) Eliot's best novel; given his preference for the not-too-distant, 'visitable past', and the remoteness of Eliot's fictional setting, this is at first surprising. But Eliot's understanding of history in the novel chimes closely with James's. For both writers, the historian's primary aim is to access, as far as possible, individual experience. Following James's reading of Eliot, I argue that *Romola* is a novel about the plural cosmopolitanisms at the heart of provincial life. Critics such as Hardy and Barrett have emphasized the importance of the female point of view in Eliot's fiction and its relation to history; I argue that cosmopolitanism better explains Eliot's understanding of the relationship between fiction and history. Cosmopolitanism and history function as means by which the 'historical novel' gains a new, ethically serious purpose, going beyond mere romance on the one hand, and the regurgitation of facts on the other.

Jessica Berman and Tanya Agathocleous have studied the New Woman and the male aesthete as character archetypes through which James construes the 'cosmopolite' condition in his fiction. Equally important, I argue, are those characters whose cosmopolitanism is disguised by a superficial provincialism, by juvenility and inexperience, or by a complex relationship to history. I read *What Maisie Knew* (1897), *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), and the unfinished *The Sense of the Past* (1917) in the context of James's complex understanding of cosmopolitanism. *Maisie* is a novel about the localization of history as a way of giving

meaning to the seemingly ‘modern’ but in fact historically far-reaching force of cosmopolitanism. In *Wings*, history and the cosmopolitan are shown to exist, like the scheming Kate Croy and Merton Densher, in intimate and sometimes surreptitious relation. Cosmopolitanism finds a playful but prophetic manifestation in *The Sense of the Past*. In all three texts, it is history which offers the Jamesian protagonist the best means of resolving the cosmopolitan dilemma. Cosmopolitanism gives credence to the moral problems faced by James’s protagonists; the ‘historic sense’ both warrants the geographical reach of the cosmopolite and excuses the negative aspects of cosmopolitanism (a perceived absence of roots and allegiances).

In private correspondence, playing on their shared first name, James praised Ibsen, ambiguously, as ‘Our Northern Henry’. I argue that the artistic example of Ibsen, as translated by William Archer, caused James to reconsider his own identity as a ‘cosmopolite’ from the 1890s onwards. In uniting apparently contradictory impulses, such as cosmopolitanism and provincialism, or naturalism and symbolism, Ibsen in effect cosmopolitanizes both the characters within his plays and his audience. Ibsen’s idea of history in the twelve plays beginning with *The Pillars of Society* (1877) is inextricable from a covert cosmopolitanism, thereby countering what critics have often perceived to be his provincialism. Ironically, Ibsen rehabilitates cosmopolitanism in the English-speaking world by taking it out of its usually modish, urbane settings. I further argue that in William Archer’s neglected polemical text, *The Great Analysis*, a philosophy of purposely provincialized cosmopolitanism makes explicit, in non-fictional form, the ‘provincial cosmopolitanism’ of Ibsen’s dramas.

I conclude that cosmopolitanism in the nineteenth century is, paradoxically, detachable from ideas of urbanity and metropolitanism. Eliot, James, and Ibsen all show that cosmopolitanism can exist in provincial as well as metropolitan settings, and that much of its power derives from its intervention, as an historical, aesthetic, and ethical force, in the lives of provincial or inexperienced characters. By reading cosmopolitanism through these (counterintuitive) modes, I detach both the ‘cosmopolite’ and the ‘provincial’ character from the moorings of their immediate surroundings. I also show that history is singularly important to this, by giving narrator, character, and reader a new and necessary temporal perspective.