

Race, Space and Architecture: an open access curriculum

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**Spatializing difference beyond cosmopolitanism:
rethinking planetary futures**

Abstract

This paper develops a critical engagement with ‘cosmopolitanism’ and specifically the geographical imaginations it implicates. It does so in order to work through some of the geographical closures in the new cosmopolitanism literature, and further to suggest alternative – more uncertain and speculative – spatial imaginations for modes of living together with radical alterity. The paper is written in the context of the wealth of recent literature that has sought to recuperate cosmopolitanism as a progressive political philosophy and imagination. Part of the paper’s intervention, however, is to suggest that mechanisms and political imaginations for living together might in fact gain much by stepping out from cosmopolitanism’s conceptual shadow. First, the paper argues that implicated within much of the new cosmopolitan literature is a planetary consciousness that has a long historical antecedence in western thought. The paper stresses the problematic textures of the planetary geographical imaginations embedded within avowedly cosmopolitan discourse, arguing that the ‘cosmos’ of cosmopolitanism is no geographically innocent signifier. It is in fact tethered to an imperial Apollonian gaze that cannot help but rekindle ancient Greek notions of formal order and beauty, Pythagorean beliefs in a universe of harmony, and their realization in western liberalism and particularly US cold war imperialism. Second, drawing upon postcolonial re-readings of the planet and critical geographical mobilizations of place, the paper suggests alternative, less certain, and less avowedly ‘cosmopolitan’ imaginations that have the capacity to engage difference in non-assimilatory terms. Cumulatively, the paper is an attempt to answer one simple question: what difference does it make to think geographically about cosmopolitanism?

Keywords Cosmopolitanism Living together Geography Space
Planet Place

**Spatializing difference beyond cosmopolitanism:
rethinking planetary futures**

Since Martha Nussbaum's (1994) polemical essay on the necessities and pedagogic strategies for opposing patriotism, cosmopolitanism has enjoyed something of a prolific comeback. Indeed, the sheer range of intellectual endeavour in the critical social sciences and humanities that continues to eek out the word's progressive political and ethical potential can be bewildering. Cosmopolitanism can be a political project (see Archibugi 2003), moral philosophy (Appiah 2006), way of being (Pollock et al., 2002), postcolonial disposition (Gilroy 2004), even a methodological approach to the social sciences (Beck 2002; Robinson 2003). And as David Harvey has recently noted, this rich diversity of work has given rise to a proliferation of more specifically defined, adjectively prefixed, cosmopolitanisms: '...“rooted,” “situated,” “actually existing,” “discrepant,” “vernacular,” “Christian,” “bourgeois,” “liberal,” “postcolonial,” “feminist,” “proletarian,” “subaltern,” “ecological,” “socialist”, and so forth' (2009: 79; also see Werbner 2006: 496-7). Perhaps, the central and shared tenet of these disparate strands is that all people, regardless of cultural, national or other affiliations, do or can belong to a single, universal community of human beings that should be cultivated. Indeed, a propensity to look, reach and feel beyond the local towards the scale of the planetary, or the 'cosmos', has been a consistent feature of cosmopolitanism from its third century BCE Cynic-influenced Stoic inception, through its eighteenth century revival in Kant's *Perpetual Peace* (1970 [1795]), to contemporary mobilizations of the concept.

The sheer diversity of contemporary approaches to cosmopolitanism has also seen it become a somewhat indeterminate signifier; its meaning often seeming to

teeter on the edge of relevance simply because it can mean so many different things in so many different contexts (Skrbis et al. 2004: 115; Pollock et al. 2002). Precisely because of its ubiquity, however, these days it is difficult to have a debate about the challenges of living together beyond the local, with difference, in the face of alterity, without stepping out from the concept's long over-reaching shadows. In other words, cosmopolitanism has become something of a synonym for living together. In this respect, even critical intellectual engagements of the term have tended to return to it in order to stake out new, different and more progressive ways of being, thinking and living together. For example, in the introduction to their well-known edited collection that attempts to reappraise cosmopolitanism, drawing its significance beyond its European philosophical lineage, Sheldon Pollock et al. write:

Two things should already be clear from the kinds of materials that make their appearance in this collection of essays and the problematics they generate. The first is how radically we can rewrite the history of cosmopolitanism and how dramatically we can redraw its map once we are prepared to think outside the box of European intellectual history. And the second is how manifold is the range of practices that might allow for new and alternative theorization. (2002: 11)

What becomes evident in this collection, however, is that the work of thinking 'outside the box of European intellectual history' ultimately returns firmly to the concept itself. Doing cosmopolitanism better, more inclusively, it seems, is what is required to re-actuate the concept's ethical élan of living together beyond the local. It is precisely this kind of critical intellectual manoeuvre that has led to the development of the surfeit of adjectival prefixes that David Harvey names; meanwhile

‘cosmopolitanism’ itself remains in place as an increasingly unquestioned byword for living together. Typically, this kind of critical work proceeds to identify more and different kinds of planetary and ethical perspectives and practices *as* explicitly ‘cosmopolitan’. As Pollock et al. remind us, however, in historical intellectual terms ‘cosmopolitanism’ itself is irredeemably European.

What I want to suggest in this paper is that such attempts to pluralize our understandings of cosmopolitanism ultimately serve to reconstitute the liberalism, rationalities and taxonomies of thought that are tethered to the concept’s irredeemably European and universalizing set of values and human normativities. In other words, cosmopolitanism’s pluralization does little to open a Eurocentric critical intellectual imagination up to differences *not* proscribed by a centre that sets the parameters for difference. As I argue, mechanisms and political imaginations for living together might in fact gain much by stepping out from cosmopolitanism’s long conceptual shadow. In particular, what I gesture toward in what follows is a future oriented political imagination with the capacity to embrace the prospect of incommensurable, that is to say untranslatable, difference. My aim therefore is not to further pluralize understandings of cosmopolitanism, for it is part of my argument that cosmopolitanism may indeed be part of the very problem of liberal multiculturalism’s closures. Instead, my aim is to dismantle something of the concept itself in ways that gesture towards alternative ways of being, thinking, and living together with radical alterity, beyond the figuratively and spatially local. The paper is something of a critical historicization of cosmopolitan discourse (Brennan 2003: 41), but one that ultimately serves as a negation of the concept. Ultimately, it seeks a way out of the dominant and proliferating discourse of cosmopolitanism within the critical social sciences and humanities in the belief that there is much to be

gained by envisioning a politics of living together beyond the strictures of *any* avowedly cosmopolitan imagination.

My approach to this task works through the register of geography, for as I argue, thinking spatially about cosmopolitanism is precisely what offers the capacity to prize apart some of the concept's unthinking Eurocentrism. In particular, it is the planetary geographical imagination – the contours of the global, the universal – that I focus on in what follows. The stakes of geographically engaging cosmopolitanism, I suggest, are great. As David Harvey (2009: 17-36; and 2000) has recently suggested, Immanuel Kant's conception of cosmopolitan law was dependent upon certain kinds of restrictive geographical thought that implicated what he thought to be the finite qualities of a globe divided into discrete culture-language areas, or territories. The problem with Kant's impoverished geography was that he referred to it as a 'condition of possibility', a 'propaedeutic', for all other forms of reasoning, knowledge and ethical formulation (ibid.: 29; also Dikec 2002). In other words, a fixed geography of the earth's finite surface, full with its 'geographical racisms and ethnic prejudices' (Dikec 2002: 231), is what Harvey refers to as the 'precritical given' for Kant's cosmopolitanism. Of course, contemporary scholarship on cosmopolitanism is no longer bound to such finite, territorial and racist geographies. On the contrary, the globe, planet, or whole earth, is something of an antidote to a Kantian, or otherwise, territorial geographical imagination of finitude. Nevertheless, in reverting to Kant, Harvey means to stress that something of the 'precritical given' remains in the spatial underpinnings to even contemporary cosmopolitan scholarship and its planetary yearnings. It is the seeming banality of accepted geographical knowledges that, as he writes, 'makes it seem as if there is little or no point in interrogating the obvious,

when it turns out that this obviousness is a mask for something far more problematic’ (Harvey 2009: 125).

Harvey’s own engagement of cosmopolitanism’s ‘propaedeutic geographies’ ultimately, however, joins the host of recent critical cosmopolitan scholarship by re-embracing the concept itself. Somewhat disappointingly, he argues that a profounder ‘appreciation of place construction and the socio-ecological dialectic’ can work in the interest of ‘a more adequate form of cosmopolitanism’ (ibid., 280). Taking his spatial interrogations further, my own critical geographical intervention works in the interests of a more literal departure – in the sense of a break – from cosmopolitanism, particularly in the context of the planetary geographies that trail in its wake. For implicit, and often explicit, in cosmopolitanism scholarship is a planetary geographical imagination championed over and above the parochialism of the nation-state. As I show in the first half of this paper, the planet thought in particular kinds of ways also mobilizes a litany of stultifying ‘precritical geographical givens’. I stress the problematic textures of the planetary geographical imaginations so often embedded within avowedly cosmopolitan discourse, arguing that the ‘cosmos’ of cosmopolitanism is no geographically innocent signifier. It is in fact tethered to an imperial Apollonian gaze that cannot help but rekindle ancient Greek notions of formal order and beauty, Pythagorean beliefs in a universe of harmony, proportion, order and unity (Cosgrove 2008: 35), and their realization in western liberalism and particularly US cold war imperialism. As I argue, such planetary yearnings normalize universality *as* an extension of Eurocentric modernity. In the second half of the paper, drawing upon postcolonial re-readings of the planet and critical geographical mobilizations of place that in turn work through the uncertainty of futurity and the contingency of relationality, I gesture toward alternative less avowedly

‘cosmopolitan’ imaginations. These alternative geographical imaginations, I suggest, have the political capacity to engage difference in non-assimilatory terms, specifically by creating conceptual space for the recognition of ontological diversity in the space-times of the here and now, as well as for forging trans-local relationalities.

Cumulatively, the paper is an attempt to answer one simple question: what difference does it make to think geographically about cosmopolitanism?

Cosmopolitan yearning, Apollonian vision

In his book *After Empire* (2004), Paul Gilroy develops an assertively cosmopolitan view positioned, he suggests, to disavow the postcolonial melancholia of a contemporary British nostalgia for its lost empire. Gilroy argues for a ‘cosmopolitanism-from-below’ that like other contemporary mobilizations of the concept looks to recuperate much of the hopeful, humanist and worldly élan found in cosmopolitanism’s Socratic and Cynic influenced Stoic heritage, and in its revival in Kant’s enlightenment forms. Here we arrive at the human-centered conception of cosmopolitanism as a desire for some kind of ‘world citizenship’ and ‘planetary yearning’. Whilst Gilroy’s cosmopolitanism-from-below holds out such worldly ambition, it is at the same time decidedly ‘vulgar’, ‘demotic’ and ambivalent about culture or nation-state thought simply as structures (Gilroy 2004: 75). This is a cosmopolitanism committed to embracing the radical potential of messy, unruly and agonistic encounters with difference on the ground; a politics of difference that embraces ‘[t]he challenge of being in the same present, of synchronizing difference and articulating cosmopolitan hope upward from below rather than imposing it downward from on high’ (ibid.: 74). The key is a sense of diversity within sameness generated through the affective intensities of co-habitation, and it is precisely a

revivified cosmopolitan commitment to conjoining heterogeneous citizens within one world that joins *us* together under the sign of humanity.

The image of ‘the planet’ becomes central to Gilroy’s invigorating vision of a more cosmopolitan future. Indeed, the first part of his book is aptly titled ‘The Planet’, and in it he develops an avowedly ‘Apollonian’ vision of the whole earth to signify the ambition of this planetary consciousness:

The last third of the twentieth century saw our world becoming a different kind of object, approached through a geopoetry that operates on an earthly scale and is not oriented by fundamental concern for the sovereign territory of national states. Images of the Earth photographed from outside its orbit by the Apollo spacecraft in 1972 have emerged as the emblem or signature of this novel planetary consciousness. (ibid.: 81)

If the nuts and bolts of cosmopolitanism-from-below are in the turbulence of lived encounters, Gilroy’s theoretico-political project coheres because of the planetary ambitions and yearnings we might hold out for such encounters. Bypassing the scalar categories of nation-state, race, even culture, the motif of the planet becomes that which is common to humanity. It is, however, a very particular planetary image that emblemizes this cosmopolitanism: ‘the iconic imprint of N.A.S.A. photograph AS17-22727’ (ibid.) taken during the Apollo 17 space flight of 1972 (see figure 1). AS17-22727 becomes the emblem for a cosmopolitanism that articulates a new humanism. This planet *is* the ground that unites humankind, a geo common to all, but one that can only be glimpsed through moments of willing transcendence of that ground. What interests me in the context of this paper is precisely how this kind of planetary imagination is framed *as* emblematic cosmopolitan vision.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

Figure 1. AS17-148-22727 (NASA, 1972), Source: NASA

Achieving this planetary perspective is both physically and figuratively to loose the bonds of the earth, escape the shackles of time, and dissolve the contingencies of daily life for a universal moment of ‘reverie’ and ‘harmony’. Seeing and imagining the planet like this, it is easy to become immersed in a sense of ‘reverie’, the word being the closest English translation of the Latin *somnium*, which was itself was used to convey the imaginative dreaming long associated with rising over the earth. There is a powerful sense of reverie in Paul Gilroy’s emblematic mobilizations of AS17-22727. His commitment to a humane ‘hopeful despair’ for the planet, which is directly counter-posed to the globalized mindset of the fortunate traveller, writes the planet as ‘a small, fragile, finite place, one planet among others with strictly limited resources that are allocated unequally’ (2004: 83). If ‘geopiety’ (81) connotes something of a dutiful respect – sacred or secular – for the singularity of the planet, then it is born from a kind of geo-pity that emerges from ‘[t]he change of scale tied into this “Apollonian” view of the whole world’ (84). The common horizon of the planetary scale, so often mobilized by new cosmopolitans as an antidote to nation-state or culture, acts in this way as a cosmo-ethical imperative, echoing Stoic recognition of human insignificance in the vastness of creation. And like all imperatives it is certain. If we can transcend the sovereign feeling of the nation-state, the ‘ologies’ of race, even the structures of culture, the one thing we cannot transcend is this view of the planet. It is, rather, what we achieve when we transcend.

Being struck by AS17-22727 in this emblematic and hopeful way is by no means unusual. There is no doubt that it affectively stirs a certain cosmopolitan yearning. Neither, however, does it represent any radical rupture from the European history and implications of the Apollonian gaze. Claims that the geopoetry we might find in AS17-22727 offer new departures for a new critical cosmopolitanism deserve therefore to be treated with caution. In this respect, the cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove (2001) offers an instructive historicization of the Apollonian gaze that helps to make a by now classically postcolonial point: Europe and North America have used rational and geometric projections that have allowed them to dominate the world and pass them off as neutral and unmarked (also see Hulme 2005). Cosgrove's book *Apollo's eye* offers a rich contextual history of the whole earth thought and seen as globe, sphere and cosmos. From Ancient Greece and Seneca's Rome right through twentieth century Italian 'air age' modernism and the Apollo space photographs, he has shown how the Apollonian gaze has long pervaded the western imagination. By doing so, he probes the reverie that writes the planet as completion and universality, as 'cosmos', because as he argues, the Apollonian global projection, like all maps (see Harley and Woodward 1987; Black 1997), rhetorically occupies a position of overview or domination through its reclamation of a singular perspective (Hulme 2005: 51). For Cosgrove:

The Apollonian gaze, which pulls diverse life on earth into a vision of unity, is individualized, a divine and mastering view from a single perspective. That view is at once empowering and visionary, implying ascent from the terrestrial sphere into the zones of planets and stars.

And in this way:

...the Apollonian gaze seizes divine authority for itself, radiating power across the global surface from a sacred centre, locating and projecting human authority imperially toward the ends of the earth. (2001, p.xi)

It is precisely because the ambition of this Apollonian reverie has such a foundation in the western cartographic and geographical imagination, going right back through Greek and Roman mythology and Pythagorean notions of the harmony and perfection of 'cosmos', that Cosgrove refers to the Apollo space programme's earth photographs as nothing less than the work of 'Realizing Apollo's view' (2001: 254). This way of seeing the planet, therefore, is no rupture with the political preoccupations of territoriality, racialization, or culture. Instead, it is the achievement of an imperial effort to design universality; an effort whose idiom is entirely continuous through the fashioning of a self-confident European, and enlightenment, 'planetary consciousness' (see Pratt 1992: 15-37).

The realization of this planetary consciousness – Apollo's view – in photographic form only emerged as competitive cold war globalism was projected into cosmic space in the late 1950s. At the Senate debate on the establishment of NASA in 1958, the future president Lyndon B. Johnson set out the geopolitical challenge of outer space exploration in terms that explicitly mobilized connections to imperial ambition: "The Roman Empire controlled the world because it could build roads... the British Empire was dominant because it had ships. In the air age we were powerful because we had airplanes. Now the Communists have established a foothold in outer space" (Johnson quoted in Cosgrove 2001: 256). In this cold war context where both the United States and the Soviet Union deployed the rhetoric of universal freedom and common human rights in their respective political idioms, the race for

outer space was one key medium through which competing political universalisms were contested. The very name 'Project Apollo', denoting the US's aim to within a decade land a man on the moon and bring him safely home, consciously mobilized western global imaginaries of transcendence and harmony associated with the eponymous sun god.

As Denis Cosgrove's reading of the Apollo space photographs points out, the Apollo programme also made a conscious effort to position itself and its cast within the progressive narrative of western explorations and missions to the frontiers of known space, in this sense echoing Columbus and countless subsequent 'heroic' discoverers of previous imperial formations. Despite engineers' objections to manned spacecraft, a series of uniformly young, married, white male, fighter pilots were chosen and named for these liberatory missions (ibid.: 257). It was these pilot-explorers who were entrusted to deliver to the American nation the Apollonian dream. Importantly, therefore, it was US imperial ambition and exploratory spirit forged amidst cold war geopolitical ferment that delivered this image of universality, incorporating and framing the 'Western inheritance of global meanings, from the Ciceronian *somnium* and Senecan moral reflection, through Christian discourse of mission and redemption, to ideals of unity and harmony' (Cosgrove 2001: 257). The *realization* of Apollo's view.

Situating AS17-22727 like this shows the cosmopolitan reverie and geopiety it stirs to have a pre-history and politico-cultural locatedness. There is a familiarity, even predictability, then about the Apollo 8 astronaut Frank Borman's one-worldist words during Christmas 1968 as he described his feelings gazing back toward the earth from the apparent solitude of the first manned lunar craft to orbit the moon:

When you're up at the moon looking back at the earth, all those differences and nationalistic traits are pretty well going to blend and you're going to get a concept that maybe this is really one world and why the hell can't we learn to live together like decent people. (Borman in *Newsweek* 1968: 53)

The point to emphasize is simply that it was North American democracy's redemptive world-historical ambit that delivered this persuasive photographic appeal to realize the universal brotherhood of a common humanity. Paul Gilroy's emblemization of cosmopolitanism through this geographical imaginary, that is his appeal to universality via this unproblematically spatialized planet, is very definitely located and benignly bestowed to the world by the United States in the unarguably indexical visual form of the photograph. And it is precisely the evident *lack* of human presence in the photographic image that frees its imperial inclusiveness from all contingency. Indeed, as a photographic representation of the cosmopolitanism that Gilroy wishes to recuperate, the AS17-22727 image seems somehow inescapably objective. Its techno-prosthetics bring into vision an apparently perfect and unarguably spherical, singular, real and material earth. If seeing is believing, then AS17-22727 is the preeminent example of Donna Haraway's master illusion, where masculinized '[v]ision in this technological feast becomes unregulated gluttony; all seems not just mythically about the god trick of seeing everything from nowhere, but to have put the myth into ordinary practice' (1988: 581).

This is not to pull away from the most hopeful aspects of a 'cosmopolitanism-from-below'. Nor is to suggest that various proponents of new cosmopolitanisms, especially Gilroy, are not aware of the dangers of imperializing universalisms, North American or otherwise. The globe can after all be synonymous with some of the most

troubling aspects of globalization and space-time compression. Instead, critically engaging Gilroy's deployment of the Apollonian gaze like this is to implicate the problematic textures of the planetary imaginations and yearnings so central to, and implicated in, cosmopolitan vision and ambition. In this kind of analysis, space is much more than a backdrop for the things that comprise society and politics. It is also a sensible manifestation of those things, which is to stress that this kind of apparently objective, pre-critical planetary imagination is what both enables and trails in the wake of cosmopolitanist political thought. As I continue to argue in the second half of this paper, the implication of this is that the geographical imaginations we bring to the planet become the very fabric, possibility and potential for progressive and humane (co)habitations of modernity.

The questions that such critical geographical engagements of the new cosmopolitanism's planetary yearnings raise are, I argue, deep seated within the problem of universality: how we can conjure a notion of common humanity without normalizing the very idea of humanity itself? How can we open ourselves to difference without prescribing the spatial parameters through which difference is registered, even recognized, as a part of our common present? The problem of universality posed like this inheres, I suggest, in any cosmopolitan project. It is in fact best signified by the suppressed 'we' embedded in the very asking of those questions. Formulated like this, it is this privileged and hospitable 'we' that extends the invitation to liberal planetary consciousness when cosmopolitanism is normalized *as* universality; cosmopolitanism itself becomes 'god trick'. Or, in Cosgrove's words:

In projecting ideas and beliefs forged in one locale across global space, the liberal mission of universal redemption is inescapably ethnocentric and

imperial, able to admit “other” voices only if they speak and are spoken by the language of the (self-denying) center. (Cosgrove 2001: 265-7)

These warnings about the normalization of cosmopolitan thought strongly resonate with writings that emerged in the wake of the Subaltern Studies collective’s critiques of western and world history writing (see Guha 1999 [1983]; 2002). In particular, the Europe that Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) sought to provincialize is precisely that imaginary figure that remains deeply embedded in everyday habits of intellectual thought and reasoning. To work Chakrabarty’s attempt to provincialize Europe through the critique of the new cosmopolitanism’s planetary yearnings then, is to speculate on how the centre that offers and inscribes the Apollo space photographs *as* universality remains deeply tethered to a particular Eurocentric vision of universal humanity. If Chakrabarty’s well-known critique of Eurocentrism contends that political modernity is largely impossible to think of anywhere in the world without invoking certain categories and concepts, the genealogies of which go deep into the intellectual and even theological traditions of Europe (2000: 4), then cosmopolitanism is one such concept, no matter how subaltern or alternative we might struggle to make it.

To put this differently, any kind of avowedly cosmopolitan idiom cannot avoid offering ‘cosmos’ as the geographical motif for living together. Some recent deployments of cosmopolitan thought have indeed attempted to deal with just such a critique by accepting the actually existing plurality of *worlds* as well as nations, cultures and identities (see Cheah and Robbins 1998). Invariably, however, this work has fallen back on ‘cosmos’ as moniker for world, merely stressing how difficult it is ‘to make a plural for “cosmos”’ (Robbins 1998: 2). Indeed, it is precisely this

difficulty that has ultimately led to the proliferation of ‘new cosmopolitans’ (Harvey 2009: 77-97), each, as the introduction to this paper has pointed out, adjectively differentiated from older modes of cosmopolitanism, but each also ultimately offering *the* ‘cosmos’ as aspiration to universalism. To pose the problem as merely the difficulty of making a plural for cosmos like this, is however to pre-suppose ‘cosmos’ as container for difference. In this sense it seems legitimate to ask whether the parameters for difference proscribed by the very word cosmopolitanism are ever very far from Pythagorean and Platonic notions of ‘cosmos’ as the perfection of mathematical relations and conceptual forms, and their translation into modern selfhood, rationality and liberalism?

Paul Gilroy’s cosmopolitanism-from-below, like so many other new cosmopolitanisms, is so far removed from these exalted, classically European configurations that this kind of critical engagement at first seems hardly necessary. But the broader point is that a certain normalization of cosmopolitanism as *the* mechanic for achieving just modes of alterity in a common present, fixes a particular kind of planetary space as that which gives us ways of glimpsing universal humanity, and importantly, vice versa. This is a geographical tension that sits in the very belly of cosmopolitanism, however ‘vulgar’ or ‘demotic’ those cosmopolitan aspirations may be. My point in this section then is to stress caution over the precise contours of planetary geographical imaginations implicit in any avowedly cosmopolitan claim, for they necessarily bear the burden of European thought and history – the (self-denying) centre – that will continue to measure, recognize and arbitrate on difference through the very categorizations it has conjured into existence. It is precisely in this sense, for example, that claims to ‘tolerance’ in contemporary multiculturalism should be regarded with suspicion, for behind the spectre of tolerance is always a tolerating (usually

liberal, rational, western) 'I', always-already at liberty to suffer the difference of others (see Brown 2006; Jazeel 2007).

In Jacques Derrida's later work, there is a concerted effort to engage this kind of tension in a series of pieces that excavated a genealogy of concepts in the dominant western tradition (Critchley and Kearney 1997: viii-ix). In his analyses of cosmopolitanism (Derrida 1997) and hospitality (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000), he refers to these tensions as a double and contradictory imperative. If cosmopolitanism, as law or ethic, offers unconditional hospitality to the stranger, the refugee, the immigrant or newcomer, it is an offer to 'our space' extended by an enplaced sovereign, and thereby controlled by the law (Derrida 1997). In this sense, there are always conditions to unconditional hospitality. And for Derrida, excavating this double imperative at the heart of concepts like cosmopolitanism and hospitality – that is, asserting the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of an unconditional ethics of hospitality or cosmopolitanism – is not to disable political action that works toward living with difference on more equitable grounds. Rather, it is to urge a continual and iterative process of legal deconstruction and reconstruction that has the potential to forge new cosmopolitan laws through which difference might emerge in idioms progressively less violently translated by the center.

This is the turbulent politics of everyday life that, for example, Paul Gilroy offers through 'vulgar' or 'demotic' cosmopolitanism; cosmopolitan law that always undoes itself in the imagination of a future to-come that is yet more cosmopolitan. Symptomatically however, for Gilroy a particular kind of planet must always emerge as motif for such cosmopolitan yearning: the pre-critically geographically given planet of Apollo's eye. The question is, therefore, how progressively 'demotic', 'vulgar', and reconstitutive can any attempt to live with difference be when it

reconstitutes ‘cosmopolitanism’ as the telos of that demotic effort? Derrida for one seemed to want to retain an always iteratively reconstituted ‘cosmopolitan’ law as an anchor against nihilism or relativism (an important point, to which I return below). However, as cosmopolitanism becomes more and more ubiquitous, the time seems right to question some of its proscriptions, assumptions, taxonomies, and ultimately its connections to a planetary yearning that is a ‘hegemonic reflex’ (Pratt 1992: 15) for much of the west.

The sociologist Michael Keith’s recent book on London’s contemporary multiculturalism poses just such critical questions of the avowedly ‘cosmopolitan fever’ (2005: 2) that he stresses has become central to the ways that London ‘curate[s] the exotica of difference’ (3). His book’s title signifies the challenge that critically engaging such cosmopolitan fever poses, by urging us to think *After the cosmopolitan?* In today’s globalizing liberal political culture where the language, ethics and spectre of tolerance so often marks the curatorial intent of avowedly multicultural cities, is it enough to still rely on cosmopolitanism to deliver a genuinely non-assimilatory sphere for the emergence of, and cohabitation with, alterity? Given the Apollonian geographical imaginations that structure avowedly cosmopolitan planetary yearning, can cosmopolitanism really allow the emergence of differences heretofore unimaginable?

Planetaryity and Place: geographies beyond cosmopolitanism

As I have suggested so far, historicizing the taken-as-given planetary imaginations tethered to cosmopolitan political thought like this is to remind that there is an inherent connection between space and politics. If part of that recognition is to regard space as the sensible manifestation of things, then another part is to acknowledge that

space can also be a mode of political thinking. That is to say, making worlds spatially, in thought or action, offers considerable political potential in terms of the task of refashioning always more inclusive collectivities. In particular, and in relation to cosmopolitanism specifically, more flexible, uncertain and dynamic planetary geographical imaginations offer the potential for living together with alterity, with untranslatable difference, than those implied by the planetary yearnings that I have suggested are deeply seated within the concept. In the last half of this paper therefore, I want to suggest some alternative geographical imaginations positioned to progressively unthink the familiarity of *our* planet; to make it instead uncanny and radically diverse in ways resistant to the cosmopolitan god trick that insists on seeing everything from nowhere (Haraway 1988). The point to stress here is that for all the reasons outlined above, such progressively uncertain and humane intentions toward difference hinge not simply and unproblematically on beholding the Apollonian gaze as redemptive and inclusive universality. Instead, they depend on working hard to generate new planetary geographical imaginations, which in turn have the capacity to progressively reshape common assumptions about, and relationships to, that scale which was central to Kant's cosmopolitan recuperation, place. The contingency and openness of spatiality at both these scales becomes key to living with difference beyond the merely cosmopolitan.

Departing from the problematics of a planetary consciousness, Gayatri Spivak proposes the suitably awkward topos of 'planetarity' to overwrite the globe (2003: 72). Reiterating the rational ordering effect of the ordered and graticuled globe, she stresses how globalization implies the same system of exchange everywhere. It gives us an 'abstract ball covered in latitudes and longitudes, cut by virtual lines, once the equator and the tropics and so on, now drawn by the requirement of Geographical

Information Systems' (ibid.). But Spivak is also careful to stress how simplified and unreflexive environmentalist and one-worldist perspectives can contribute to this globe-girdling certainty:

To talk planet-talk by way of an unexamined environmentalism, referring to an undivided "natural" space rather than a differentiated political space, can work in the interest of this globalization in the mode of the abstract as such.

(ibid.)

This is to stress that the unthinking language of one-worldism that globally extends western categories of thought – like 'nature'/'culture', like liberal selfhood, like rationality, freedom and secularism – work like a cartographer's graticule, delineating and measuring global space, and in the process universalizing particular and located notions of the fabric and composition of the whole earth, suppressing the 'we' that beholds the 'cosmos' as universality. These taxonomies of thought Mary Louise Pratt traces through the emergence of early eighteenth century Linnaean classificatory regimes that sought to construct global scale meaning through the descriptive apparatuses of natural history (1992: 15-37). And it is precisely this kind of proscriptive planetary consciousness whose avowedly cosmopolitan geographical contours were sketched in the first half of the paper, that Spivak situates 'planetarity' against.

Planetarity poses the challenge to decolonize our knowledge of the world by extending an invitation to know it from outside the categories of western thought (Krishnaswamy and Hawley 2008: 106). It is an invitation to try to grasp the differences situated beyond the coordinates of the categorical and taxonomical languages available to us to articulate preconceived notions of difference. In this

sense, planetarity is situated in the domain of uncertainty, the to-come; we can never know those differences with any certainty, which means that planetarity must also sit within the domain of subalternity. The key point here is recognizing how, as Spivak puts it, ‘alterity remains underived from us’ (2003: 73), not immediately comprehensible by the violent normalizations of a universal claiming to speak for the particular. And in this sense, the effort of planetarity urges continual hard work to keep on decentring ourselves in the face of ungraspable otherness and other worldings. Spivak is most concerned with developing planetarity to call for the deep reading of literature as a strategy for learning the planetary difference that continually ‘flings us away’, and in this sense planetarity offers a topos for learning the other worldings that liberal multiculturalism and the cosmopolitan imagination may not be equipped to recognize.

Embracing Spivak’s critique of environmental or other kinds of one-worldism is to emphasize the violent effacements of hegemonic knowledge, which works by identifying differences only through the ‘comparative mode of knowledge production’ (Grewal 2008, p.179). The point here is that non-Western textualities, ontologies and subjectivities are no longer readable except through the Orientalizing canon in which, as Aamir Mufti writes, the non-western text ‘already comes constituted as object’ (2005, p.478). Un-constituting, or *de*-scribing, already translated difference is therefore part of the hard work that stepping out from a cosmopolitanist mindset urges; this is the uncertain work of living with difference that planetarity demands. This is as much a spatial imagination as anything else because planetarity looks in fact to continually displace from the west, and realign, the axis of comparison in knowledge production and in extensions toward difference (ibid., p.487). In other

words, how can I know difference in ways that do not prescribe otherness in my own terms?

We might think here of other ways of knowing and being that are at first radically incompatible with the Apollonian image and cosmos: aboriginal animism, Buddhist attainments of non-selfhood, or Sufi mysticism. But moreover, we might think of the sheer inadequacy of the conceptual languages intuitively available to us to grasp these formations on terms true to the singularity of those differences. To write about “Buddhist attainments of non-selfhood”, for example, is to speak from an ontological starting point that takes liberal and Cartesian notions of the atomized, rational self for granted. It is to invest in a world of “nature and culture”, “subjects and objects”, where such a language is unable to comprehend on its own terms the ontological reality of the Buddhist (non)subject, which itself is inseparable from a metaphysical universe composed of energy (dhamma) (see Jazeel 2005). The point that planetarity stresses is that such worldings do not lend themselves to mere incorporation, or toleration, by a dominant cosmopolitan imagination. Furthermore, such other worldings may also in fact equally instantiate their own universals that radically destabilize the primacy of cosmopolitanism itself, perhaps in the process instantiating their own power geometries. In short, the challenge planetarity poses is the *work* of grasping the aesthetics and actualities of incommensurable differences from their own insides out, because it is that hard and uncertain work without guarantees that decentres the ‘we’ beholden to the cosmopolitan dream of a rationally knowable universality. In this sense, *unlearning* is a crucial part of the work that planetarity demands, and unlearning cosmopolitanism is one such step toward more egalitarian modes of living together.

Geographically, at the scale of ‘the planet’, planetarity demands we work with the indeterminacies and ambivalences of “our planet”, resisting some of the more obvious planetary longings that images like AS17-22727 immediately evoke. If images like AS17-22727 are stripped of some of their conventional markings of western cartographic projection, it is their very uncertainty and unknowability that is worth embracing as part of the process of extending toward difference across and within global space. Planetarity itself demands that kind of persistent introspection over the objects we take-as-given in both the social sciences and humanities; a constant and humble decentring of the masterful gazes we cast over the things we think we know with certainty. The Apollonian narrative that so often and so strongly intersects the production, circulation and negotiation of the AS17-22727 image is one such certainty that requires decentring precisely in order to embrace differences underived from ourselves. What I am urging here is very different from the geopiety or reverie that departs from the Apollonian gaze leading into an avowedly cosmopolitan condition. Instead I am suggesting that precisely by recalling the situatedness of the Apollonian gaze we might, as Donna Haraway has urged, open ourselves to ‘territories of stories unimaginable from the vantage point of the cyclopean, self-satisfied eye of the master subject’ (1988: 586). This is a wilful wrenching away from the desire to know with any degree of certainty or singularity the object depicted in AS17-22727. The image has this potential, but it requires that we work hard to leave its meanings more indeterminate, more mysterious, than perhaps they seem from the Apollonian perspective. What is it that I cannot know about this planet? What objective, aesthetic or narratological formations does the image conceal through its very cosmopolitan allusion to totality?

This could be described as a perpetual process of de- and re-inscribing the whole earth image; a process somewhat equivalent to the turbulent deconstruction and reconstruction requisite within a Derridean ethics of cosmopolitanism and hospitality (see Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000; Derrida 1997). Only, as I am suggesting, cosmopolitanism itself is a rather too certain inscription whose conceptual contours themselves warrant de-scribing. Slightly playfully, slightly counter-intuitively even, we could even suggest that this de-scribing is an anti-geography of sorts. If the modern English word ‘geography’ comes from the Greek ‘geo-grafia’, meaning to write or describe the earth, then I am suggesting that we desist from the desire to too categorically fix and singularize the meanings of the planet as totality. Provisionality and humility must be woven into the geographies we bring to the planet, and those geographies must always leave space for a plurality to-come.

This openness and capacity for indeterminacy is not without considerable relativizing risk of course. In the human realm, these risks come in the form of political rights, social justice, and the basic capacity to be able to determine a right from a wrong, justice from injustice. In the realm of the material geo itself, the risks come in the form of opening the door to human induced climate change denial for example. There is no quick fix for the tricky work of agonistic political deliberation. But working to think beyond cosmopolitanism, to invoke the realm of territories of stories unimaginable (Haraway 1988), or discontinuous epistemes (Spivak 2008: 8), is what holds within it the capacity to move toward what Chantal Mouffe (2005: 90-118) refers to as a ‘multi-polar’ political (and I would add geographical) imagination. Such political imaginations offer potentially more, not less, possibilities for justice, a point to which I return in the conclusion below.

If planetarity is an invitation, an extension, toward newness, it is also an abstraction that requires some thought about how it might be lived in place, in the grounded scene of the everyday. Michael Keith (2005: 133-35) has usefully returned to Kant in order to work through a notion of the sublime that might help with configuring how the agonistic emergence of newness without guarantees can operate at the scale of the everyday. The sublime – as Kant conceived it – refers to instances where the measurable fails resulting in an experience of magnitude without limit. Keith harnesses the progressive politics of this unmeasurable immensity as that wherein *encounters* promulgate ‘a movement out of the notional “we” that governs most things in social life and establishes “the event” as outside any formulation of the normal’ (2005: 133). Movement, dynamism and iteration, in the sense of this emplaced politics of multicultural becoming, is essential as it holds the figure of futurity and its deterritorializing potential central within a non-assimilatory conception of living with difference (Dikec et al 2009: 6).

Spatialising this kind of sublime imperative toward futurity urges that we think about the where of such encounters, because invariably the rhetoric and effort of negotiating difference is incumbent upon hosts in ‘place’. As David Harvey puts in his own geographical engagement with cosmopolitanism, ‘[t]he problem of place must be negotiated and not ignored’ (2009: 167). The problem is simply that place, perhaps more than any other geographical scale, seems most amenable to definite physical, or indeed virtual, delimitation. It is a word commonly and unthinkingly used to generate notions of earthiness, authenticity and meaning. For Doreen Massey, ‘[a] regular litany of words accompanies the characteristic evocation of place; words such as “real”, “grounded”, “everyday” and “lived”’ (2004: 7). And the boundedness of place is precisely that which enables the demarcation of an ‘us’ from ‘them’; it

generates and naturalizes the capacity for an ‘us’ to merely tolerate an ‘other’ who transgresses spatialized boundaries separating inside from outside. In their recent spatial excavation of the hospitality trope, Dikec et al suggest how either ‘explicitly or implicitly, encounters between self and other tend to be conceived of in spatial tropes of openness and closure, inclusion and exclusion, border patrolling and boundary crossing, while the “stranger” who might be welcomed or turned away is most often characterized as one who has been spatially mobilized or displaced’ (2009: 4). One of the profoundly geographical challenges posed by the futurity of planetarity then, is to configure a dynamic and creative spatial language for, and a disposition toward, that apparently most sticky, bounded and timeless of geographical scales.

In moving toward such a language in this last section, I draw upon the geographer Doreen Massey’s long-standing critique of the ways that European social theory has variously tamed space, in the process robbing it of the dynamism requisite for movement toward progressive, agonistic and turbulent futurity (see 1999; 2005: 1-59). At issue for Massey is a false counterposition of space to time, where space is thought as merely the static slice through a notion of time, or duration, that always moves onward. This has implications for how we think of place because such assumptions lead to commonplace discussions about the change *in* a particular place, as if that place itself remains a bounded container for culture, if not protected then at least suspiciously guarded from what flows into and out of it as time – but not place – moves on. There is much to be gained in working this explicitly spatial critique through, for example, Paul Gilroy’s (2004) critical engagements with the culture of melancholia that feeds contemporary Britain’s pathologies of greatness and imperial nostalgia. It is precisely the sovereign feeling of *our place* that is at stake in the face of the stranger who comes ‘in-here’. The apparent timeless meaning and aesthetics of

the local, of place thought this way, is inextricably woven into identity formation. This kind of imagination of place was also hard-wired into Kant's cosmopolitan ethic, informing his notion of justice as the right to refuse entry, the temporariness of hospitality, and the condition of permanent residency being dependent on an act of beneficence on the part of the sovereign state. It has also sustained a long tradition of writing on the quirks, particularities and peculiarities of various groups, the English, French, or other imaginatively bounded and emplaced groups (Harvey 2009: 27-8). None of this has gone away.

The value of Massey's work is the alternative language and spatial imagination she develops for thinking about places that instead of bounded, static, and walled, might more progressively be thought as relational, constellatory and 'throwntogether'. Just as this is to conceive of the duration of a place itself as constituted through its continual and turbulent deconstruction and restructuration, for Massey places themselves are only ever events, relationally formed where a multiplicity of 'spatial narratives meet up or form configurations, conjunctures of trajectories which have their own temporalities' (2005: 139). This is to evoke the explicitly relational nature of place itself, reminding that the ways we imagine and live in the imagination of place must be part of the challenge that living together poses.

Working through place as an inherently relational and contingent formation has led Massey to theorize a 'global sense of place' (1994), which urges a subjective recognition that the unique characteristics of any place, no matter how local and bounded that place might feel, is usually constituted by the coming together of narratives, trajectories and border crossings from elsewhere. The food miles that go into the various ingredients of a typical breakfast, the migrant labour cleaning local

offices, the foreign manufactured parts in the technology at our finger tips, even the passing traffic leading to and from nearby regions, towns and villages. The point of a 'global sense of place' is to live in the imagination of the knowledge that the unique characters of places are always constituted at, and as, the intersection of all these mobilities. Place is an inherently mobile event. Massey has also developed the idea of 'responsibility at a distance' (2004; 2007), which itself has led to the practical and political recognition and harnessing of the symbiotic relationships between cities as apparently separate as London and Caracas. Once again, working with this spatial imagination there is an injunction for citizens (and non-citizens) to live in the imagination of their inter-dependency with distant others.

Through all these configurations and developments of place as inherently relational, place itself emerges not as a logical and local counterposition to the global scale. Place is not opposed to the planet. It is instead an ongoing assemblage, constellation, and agonistic coming together of narratives and trajectories that are in themselves insufficiently conceptualized as either local or global. The spatiality of place, in this sense, provides the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity (Massey 1999: 279). The negotiation of difference in place is always a process of, and invitation to, reconstellate the 'we', and place's geographical challenge thought this way is precisely that it is never closeable. This is a spatial injunction to live in the imagination of a sublime that might creep up on us at any moment, taking us into new territorializations of the normal, of the 'we'. At the same time, however, this is not to suggest that each of us belongs to 'a' place (in the singular) (see Robbins 1998: 3), which can now be progressively thought as relational. It is, however, to suggest that all those places to which we might feel a sense of belonging are, and have always been, relationally intertwined, dynamic, and

turbulently moving on. Indeed, our multiple belongings to multiple places form an integral part of place's relationality. Place, thought relationally this way, is a geographical process without end, one deeply entwined with the political:

Reconceptualising place this way puts on the agenda a different set of political questions. There can be no assumption of pre-given coherence, or of community or collective identity. Rather the throwntogetherness of place demands negotiation. In sharp contrast to the view of place as settled and pre-given, with a coherence only to be disturbed by "external" forces, places as presented here in a sense necessitate invention; they pose a challenge... They require that, in one way or another, we confront the challenge of the negotiation of multiplicity. (Massey 2005: 141)

Thinking place as relational is one way of grounding the challenge of the unexpected, the discontinuous, that planetarity poses. Living in the imagination of this kind of place, this kind of planet, offers a way of living together beyond the proscriptions of the avowedly cosmopolitan.

Conclusion

I have argued in this paper that cosmopolitanism poses an intense geographical challenge. Part of that challenge requires developing a spatial imagination that has the capacity to actually step out from the long conceptual, political and ultimately geographical shadows that cosmopolitanism casts, and to thereby deliver on the concept's own promise of living not just with difference, but moreover with radical, heretofore unimaginable difference. As I have argued, this involves unthinking the spatial fixities woven into taken-as-given conceptions of the planet that we find

embedded within cosmopolitanism, because in this idiom the prevalent planetary consciousness has a direct historical antecedence in the Apollonian gaze, its cosmographic reverie and the birth and realization of imperial(izing) political designs. Cosmopolitanism may be universal, but it also cannot help but write the world, the planet, in its own terms.

As the introduction to this paper has set out however, cosmopolitan fever persists, and for good reasons. Derrida's (1997) invitation to think about cosmopolitanism as a process of continual deconstruction and restructuration always implied the ongoing re-configuration of new cosmopolitan principles and laws, at each iterative stroke leaving a society more open, hospitable, and democratic than previously. His commitment to cosmopolitanism's own futurity (also see Pollock et al. 2002), and importantly its perennial reterritorialization, works in the service of what for thinkers like Derrida is an undeconstructable concern for justice (Critchley and Kearney 1997: viii). In similar ways, Ulrich Beck's recent articulations of an avowedly 'cosmopolitan condition' gesture toward just such open and hopeful futurities: '[t]he expectation of the unexpected requires that the self-evident is no longer taken as self-evident. The shock of danger is a call for a new beginning. Where there is a new beginning, action is possible' (2007: 288; also 2006: 99-129). Beck – like Derrida and a host of other new cosmopolitan theorists (that includes David Harvey) – return to the familiarity of cosmopolitanism to corral and territorialize such new beginnings, and they do so in the hope of establishing some common form of social justice. For many, there is simply too much at stake to abandon cosmopolitanism. The question of how to attain a universal political communion *with* justice is, therefore, integral to the conceptual longevity of new cosmopolitanisms.

It is true of course that *injustice* in the form of social hierarchy, marginalization and cultural or economic prejudices can themselves be present in those new ‘territories of stories unimaginable’ (Haraway 1988: 586) that this paper’s geographical critique of cosmopolitanism would reveal. But this is no reason to legislate against the more creative and critical deployments of a geographical approach to the challenge of living together that I have attempted to articulate. For in newness are also the dormant capacities for more egalitarian forms of collectivity and recognition, as well as new modes of social, political and environmental justice. The point to stress is that geographical theory cannot in itself answer analytical or political questions. Rather, it lays the conditions of possibility for finding answers (Harvey 2009, p.260). In this sense, this essay is no thoughtless provocation to the new cosmopolitanism’s promise of social justice. Rather, it has worked to question that restructuralizing return to the cosmopolitan by opening out some of the concept’s more restrictive geographical imaginations and implications; cosmopolitanism’s own injustices as it were. What is at stake each time we reconstellate the unexpected, the new, the heretofore unimaginable, under familiar cosmopolitan planetary yearnings? Politically, as Chantal Mouffe has put it:

Whatever its guise, the implementation of a cosmopolitan order would in fact result in the imposition of one single model, the liberal democratic one, on to the whole world. In fact, it would mean bringing more and more people directly under the control of the West, with the argument that its model is the better suited to the implementation of human rights and universal values. (2005: 103)

Reconstellating the new or unimaginable under the conceptual emblem of cosmopolitanism – however new, subaltern, everyday, demotic or vulgar that cosmopolitanism may be – runs the risk of reappropriating difference such that it becomes legible, transparent and ultimately subordinate to the hegemonic dimension of politics and liberal subjectivity. What I have suggested in this paper is that part of the new cosmopolitanism’s futurity must now necessitate imagining a future of living together beyond cosmopolitanism. A truly subaltern cosmopolitanism might now look to its own undoing. Derrida himself, despite his apparent predilection for cosmopolitanism’s perennial restructuration, seemed to anticipate just such political futures beyond the cosmopolitan. As he writes in the very last lines of his essay *On Cosmopolitanism* (1997: 23):

Being on the threshold of these cities, of these new cities that would be something other than ‘new cities’, a certain idea of cosmopolitanism, *an other*, has not yet arrived, *perhaps*.

- If it has (*indeed*) arrived...

- ... then, one has perhaps not yet recognised it.

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