Risky Cosmopolitanism:
Risk and Responsibility in
Catherine Bush's *The Rules of Engagement*

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Characters repeatedly ask other characters what they would risk (for love, for safety, for others) in Catherine Bush's 2000 novel *The Rules of Engagement*; the avoidance of risk, and the search for its opposite, caution, act as the primary catalyzing forces for action in the novel.[1] Arcadia Hearne, the novel's protagonist, abandons her family and Canada for the (seeming) safety of London in the face of personal violence when Evan, her boyfriend, and Neil, the man with whom she has had an affair, fight a duel over her. Basra Alale, a Somali refugee whom Arcadia encounters in London, must leave Somalia via Kenyan refugee camps and London to arrive in Toronto in the face of the lingering violence of the Somali civil war and the broader legacies of Somali clan traditions. Amir Barmour, with whom Arcadia becomes romantically involved in London, must leave Iran on foot, arriving in England via Frankfurt to escape the ideological violence of the Iranian mullahs. The global movement of all three characters centres on questions of risk and responsibility as, in all three cases, they are forced to leave others behind in order to evade risk. Yet, instead of a narrative that progresses towards safety and away from risk, *Rules of Engagement* posits risk-taking as inevitable, suggesting that one must engage it rather than avoid it. Nonetheless, the novel does not suggest that all risks are commensurate; instead, Bush outlines a model of cosmopolitical engagement that centers on the transformation of personal risks into global cosmopolitical responsibility. I argue in this paper that *Rules of Engagement* theorizes a model of cosmopolitanism that brings together competing theoretical discourses on the topic by emphasizing the connection between/inseparability of elite and subaltern cosmopolitan subjects in a system defined (per Ulrich Beck) by global risk. For Bush, this recognition of risk foregrounds the necessary centrality

of responsibility to a global cosmopolitics, acknowledging the affective potential of personal experience (and, by extension, the aesthetic).

Hannah Arendt argues that while "our political life rests on the assumption that we can produce equality through organization, because man can act in and change and build a common world, together with his equals and only with his equals," "the 'alien' [remains] a frightening symbol of the fact of difference as such, of individuality as such, and indicates those realms in which man cannot change and cannot act and in which, therefore, he has a distinct tendency to destroy" (301). This link between an artificial (yet reassuring) equality and a terrifying individuality highlights the ideological ground of a critically reflexive or ethical cosmopolitanism. Such a cosmopolitanism is ultimately compelled to address interconnection rather than just the self, refiguring the relationship between the individual citizen and the global *polis*. *Rules of Engagement* offers one possible way of speaking to this problem: the question of responsibility—and a particularly cosmopolitan version—as a way of mediating between the narcissistic self and the global common. Rather than privileging one version over the other, or outlining the possibility of the existence of subaltern cosmopolitanism, *Rules of Engagement* instead brings these two versions together, showing the way they operate in concert.

The narrative and character twinning that Bush establishes between Arcadia and Basra mirrors the connection between the (so-called) elite and subaltern cosmopolitan subjects. Through global systems of capital and cultural exchange, the elite and subaltern are never so far apart as these two words would suggest; instead, they are intimately linked and mutually constituting. In other words, it might be helpful to think of the experiences of the elite and subaltern cosmopolite as expressing a difference in scale rather than a fundamental difference in kind. But what does this mean? What does this connection entail? I argue that this connection reveals the need to re-prioritize notions of responsibility to theorizations of cosmopolitical citizenship, rather than the typical emphasis on a kind of identity politics whereby the cosmopolitan individual is at the implicit centre of any kind of cosmopolitan theory. Instead of delineating what is good or bad about elite and subaltern

cosmopolitan subjectivities, what such a theoretical approach would require is thinking about the points of intersection, recognizing the (perhaps) impossibility of deciding whether or not we should aspire to global identities and, instead, working to craft more emancipatory versions. This project is at the heart of *Rules of Engagement*.

Twinning the Cosmopolitan

Broadly sketched, two of the central ways of thinking about cosmopolitanism are through the lens of the individual—liberal models expounded by Martha Nussbaum (2002), K. Anthony Appiah (2006) and Jeremy Waldron (2006), among others—and the collective—postcolonial models theorized by Homi Bhabha (1996), Bruce Robbins and Pheng Cheah (1998), and Timothy Brennan (1997). The liberal model tends to focus on the cosmopolitan subject as personally autonomous, with an emphasis on the ethical responsibilities of such positions. The postcolonial model (sometimes referred to as the vernacular model), however, tends to focus on larger, collective categories of people who are invisible in liberal models—refugees, subaltern migrants, etc.— and it emphasizes the ongoing political ramifications of colonial and neo-colonial inequalities. While both models usefully interrogate what cosmopolitanism means (or might mean) today, they typically rely on a binary opposition between elite and subaltern cosmopolitan subject. This binary distinction, however, suggests an inherent separation between these two forms of cosmopolitanism; further, it implies the impossibility of cosmopoliticized individuals.

Rules of Engagement usefully enters into the gap between these two models, suggesting the interconnections between elite and subaltern cosmopolitan subjects—and the political necessity of transforming individualized subjects into global citizens. Through the twinned characters of Arcadia and Basra, Bush suggests the falseness of insisting on absolute difference between elite and subaltern cosmopolitan subjects; instead, she establishes an imaginative continuum of more and less privileged access to cosmopolitan subjectivities.

Though appearing only briefly in person in the novel, Basra Alale, the Somalian refugee whom Arcadia brings forged documents, occupies a

significant role throughout the novel as twinned figure with Arcadia. One of the most obvious ways in which Bush suggests the twinning of these two characters is through their names. Both Basra and Arcadia are names that allude to edenic spaces; Basra is one of the suggested geographical locations of the Biblical Garden of Eden, and Arcadia is the pastoral wilderness home of Pan in Greek mythology, immortalized in Virgil's *Eclogues* and Sidney's *Arcadia*. Basra and Arcadia evoke, then, pre-modern sites of innocence and simplicity; both are implicitly paradisal, though not in the sense of any particular afterlife—these are are heavenly places, but not heaven. The pastoral suggests "a withdrawal to a place apart that is close to the elemental rhythms of nature, where [one] gains a new perspective on the complexities, frustrations, and conflicts of the social world" (Abrams 241). As Glen Love suggests, "the pastoral can be a serious and complex criticism of life, involved not merely with country scenes and natural life but with a significant commentary on the explicit or implicit contrast between such settings and the lives of an urban and sophisticated audience" (65). While *Rules of Engagement* is not a pastoral novel by any means, Bush deploys these allusions to an Edenic pastoral in much the way that Love suggests more typically pastoral works do; namely, these character names evoke the pastoral only to suggest the risk that pervades so much of modern life.

This distinction between the pastoral and the dangerous pervades the novel. One of the first descriptions of Arcadia's London apartment makes this distinction clear:

> there was comfort in this room, my white cocoon. I'd built a haven within these four walls. There was safety in the flicker of flame against the pale green ceramic tiles that line the fireplace… In the maps that cover the walls—maps dotted with pins and pencil lines to demarcate the world's restlessly new and shifting borders. Even in the titles lining the bookshelves, titles like *Slaughterhouse* and *How to Make War* and *The Origins of War*. (13)

This juxtaposition between "cocoon" and "haven," and "slaughterhouse" and "war" suggests the simultaneity of safety and an inescapable danger.

A similar comparison occurs further on when Arcadia works in the British War Museum and notes that, outside, "bright lawns blazed beneath a glittery noontime sun—still green on the surface, although if you stepped onto the grass, the ground beneath was hard as tack… All that pastoral beauty. Sheep would not have looked out of place" (18).

This juxtaposition between hard and soft, cocoon and slaughterhouse, only becomes more explicit when Arcadia meets Basra. On meeting her, Arcadia remembers stories she has heard from war correspondents about the brutal violence done to civilians in Basra during and in the aftermath of the first Gulf War. The implied violence of Arcadia's scholarly books and the hardness of the ground are shown here to be mere intimations of the more profound violence that the refugee undergoes. This second juxtaposition between Basra and Arcadia suggests that a reductive equivalency is drawn between the two, "occlud[ing] the significant differences between these narratives" (Authers 796). While this is certainly a plausible reading, I want to suggest that we might also read this suggestion of violences in London (however minor or banal) as a reminder of the constant, significant violences that occur elsewhere—often caused (directly or indirectly) by the global systems that touch down in London (and elsewhere). These reminders highlight "the hot-spots to which [Arcadia] and London are connected but from which, she believes, they are protected" (Ball 82). While Arcadia is unsure of Basra's exact immigration status, her friend's story of Basra is about the violence done to Iraqi refugees and this story is flanked by Arcadia's memories of other, similarly violent immigration stories. Basra is Somali, rather than Iraqi;[2] her history is connected to similar violence—violence that Arcadia (and the readers of this novel, implicitly) have tried to forget. This forgetting is tied to, as Sherene Razack argues, the "mythologies [that] help the nation to forget its bloody past and present" (9).

These parallel names indicate one of the ways these two characters are tied together by the novel; a tie that suggests the violence that makes the pastoral an impossibility in contemporary times. Both Arcadia and Basra have experienced violence of different sorts and magnitudes, making it impossible for either to imagine the Edenic pastoral that their names evoke. While the catalyzing violence that leads to Basra's and

Arcadia's immigration is not of the same scale, tellingly, both understand their migration and the necessity of it as stemming from violence. And in both cases, it is neither an abstract violence nor something wholly unconnected to their own actions. Both women are framed as agents who, just the same, cannot escape old violences, whether tribal or romantic. Basra "was a university student in Mogadishu, she sang with this group—they were all students… but she was the only girl, and I think she wrote the songs—about the trouble with clans" (25). Basra is framed here not solely as a helpless victim but as a political agent in a space where political activism, particularly by women, is disallowed. She is framed then as an active, resisting subject rather than the passive object of oppression. This vision of agency points back to the novel's fundamental concern with the tensions between danger, safety, risk and responsibility. Violence is repeatedly shown to be endemic to contemporary society—mirroring Hardt and Negri's claims in *Multitude* of a contemporary state of perpetual war (3–95)—yet neither Basra nor Arcadia are presented as wholly victims to this violence. On encountering Basra again, in Toronto, Arcadia notes that "what had struck me, on first meeting, as simple willowiness now seemed, in retrospect, to have been a kind of bony strain, which was missing. She did not look relaxed, exactly, but some taut core of fear had migrated" (273).

This vision of a relaxed Basra evokes popular multicultural platitudes about Toronto, and Canada more broadly, as a place free of the racial and ethnic violence of the rest of the world. Yet this fantasy is complicated by Arcadia's earlier encounter with a Somali man who knows Basra, who warns Arcadia that "you will cause trouble for her. Here. If you do this" (206), as well as by her realization that "Clan loyalties were perhaps as strong here as over there. Perhaps Basra's songs protesting the stranglehold of clan allegiances were known here. Perhaps I should not, in fact, be asking after her" (189). Violence is never far from the surface—even in the seemingly cosmo-multicultural haven of Toronto. This suggestion of violence in even the most ostensibly safe places echoes through the duel between Evan and Neil that causes Arcadia to flee Canada for London. The duel takes place in the ravines of Toronto—a site that evokes the pastoral nature of both Arcadia's and Basra's names

yet also introduces a note of wildness to the proceedings, as though what unfolds between Evan and Neil is the result of atavistic passions: further suggesting the inescapability of the violence that pervades *The Rules of Engagement*.

This connection to longer diachronic histories of violence is also spread out, synchronically, through the immediate families of both Arcadia and Basra and the impact violence and risk has on, particularly, their respective sisters. For if their names and immigration histories parallel one another, for the most past, Arcadia's and Basra's different privileges and limits become more transparent in the stories of their sisters. Indeed, tellingly, both sisters act primarily upon Arcadia as a kind of instigating force: Lux, her sister, leads her to encounter Basra for the first time, while Basra's request for her to smuggle documents to a Kenyan refugee camp for her sister (who remains unnamed) is what prompts Arcadia to abandon an individualized caution for a globalized risk. Further, Lux's and Basra's sister's experiences with the global refugee system highlight the different stakes for Arcadia and Lux in comparison to Basra and her sister. Lux's experiences smuggling recording equipment to musicians in developing nations is framed by her, initially, as free from risk: "It's not that suspicious. I mean, what's odd about me traveling with a palmcorder? I've never been stopped" (24). Yet when she is stopped by Mozambiquan border guards, she begins to doubt her ability to manage risk: "I was completely freaked out. Always before, I'd known there was a chance something could happen but it didn't. I was lucky, but what I *felt* was that I was good at this, I had some kind of knack. I was inviolable. Inviolate? And then I lost that, I lost it completely" (231). For Lux, these encounters with global violence are a kind of game—her ability to "win" is based on her "luck," "knack" and freedom from suspicion (all things which might, in these instances, have everything to do with her global position as a middle-class white woman, traveling as a music journalist).

The reality of Basra's sister's situation, on the other hand, reveals that what seems like a game—a dangerous one, but a game nonetheless—to Lux is not so simple for others. For Basra's sister, still in a Kenyan refugee camp, "now, it is dangerous. There and at home [Somalia]. There is no

one to protect her" (275). This gap in protection is where Arcadia, the cosmopolitan subject who learns to accept risk, is able to intervene, suggesting that the cosmopolitan risks necessary in the novel for true global responsibility, rather than just self-preservation, is one that emerges out of personal engagement with others; "violence is personal, Arcadia's experience of the duel tells her, and, through an understanding of its conceptual inconsistencies and 'internal contradiction[s],' politics come to be understood as similarly personal" (Authers 786). Arcadia is initially reticent to perform what Basra asks—smuggle a forged passport to her sister in the refugee camp—but, once she learns to mourn the actions of Evan and Neil, she is able to take on her cosmopolitan responsibilities to global others. Here, the novel reaches a barrier, unconsciously repeating some of the same privileges that Lux takes for granted: the ability of the white Westerner to broach any border. While this is the very tactic used by activist groups such as Christian Peacemaker Teams and International Solidarity Movement,[3] Arcadia's action are mostly confined to a *bildungsroman* narrative whereby she, the upper-middle-class white woman, is politicized through her relationships with the (mostly silent) Somali woman and Iranian man. Nonetheless, by pairing Arcadia with Basra in these ways throughout the novel, Bush opens up a complicated space, revealing the ways the cosmopolitan risks both Arcadia and Basra undertake are pervasive well outside of their individual spheres. What *Rules of Engagement* suggests, however implicitly, is the way that the safety (the ability to refuse risk) of Arcadia's life is intimately connected to the risk (the inability to rely on safety) of Basra's life. While the novel seems to merely replicate longstanding privileges, it creates a compelling cosmpolitan matrix that refuses the seeming straightforwardness of these categories.

Risky Cosmopolitanism

So while Arcadia and Basra are twinned, their experiences are hardly commensurate. As Benjamin Authers suggests "if Arcadia's displacement from Toronto to London is intended to reflect the global flow of refugees, for example, then it does so by eliding how her ability to flee one country and become part of another with relative ease is inseparable

from her status as a Canadian citizen, and as a white woman" (796). Yet, as Ulrich Beck's notion of world risk society suggests, the risk (again of fundamentally different magnitude in each case) that is central to their mobility marks their simultaneous enmeshment in a system (what Beck terms "advanced modernity" but which also corresponds with Hardt's and Negri's "empire") that keeps danger and risk central as a way of promoting acquiescence to the status quo. A cosmopolitanism, therefore, that does not posit risk and responsibility as being key is one that requires an elision of global systems of power.

How, then, do we understand risk? Ulrich Beck argues that "in advanced modernity the social production of *wealth* is systematically accompanied by the social production of *risks*" (*Risk Society* 19; emphasis in original). In other words, risks are created by and central to advanced modernity; they are inescapable. To avoid being enmeshed in risk is an impossibility requiring either the rejection of modernity or deep denial. Neither is, for the most part, a viable option: "risks of modernization sooner or later also strike those who produce or profit from them. They contain a *boomerang effect*, which breaks up the pattern of class and national society. Ecological disaster and atomic fallout ignore the borders of nations. Even the rich and powerful are not safe from them" (*Risk Society* 23; emphasis in original). While Beck emphasizes the unequal effects of risks (some are more substantially and frequently affected by risk than others), his suggestion of the inevitable boomerang effect of risk means that the experience of risk is not easily contained by national or subject boundaries. Indeed, "in an age in which belief and confidence in class, nation and progress has become in varying degrees questionable, the global perception of global risk is perhaps the last—ambivalent—source of new commonalities and interconnected action" ("Cosmopolitical Realism" 145).

Risk, then, according to Beck, acts as a catalyst to cosmopolitics. Rather than seeing cosmopolitanism as emerging out of the exposure to new and different experiences—a version that Beck explicitly rejects as banal ("Cosmopolitical Realism" 134)— cosmopolitics emerge out of the shared experience of the global risks of advanced modernity. This modality of the cosmopolitical sees it as "mainly…a compulsory

choice or a side effect of unconscious decisions" ("Cosmopolitical Realism" 134). While liberal cosmopolitan critics such as K. Anthony Appiah and Martha Nussbaum frame cosmopolitan identities as produced by autonomous social subjects—frequently eliding the globally unequal access to personal autonomy—Beck here frames cosmopolitanism not only as an approach to the world (not an identity *per se*) but as one that is often unconscious and compulsory—suggesting an (at least, occasional) ambivalence towards it. Further, Beck's argument of the creation of risks by modernity and the creation of a shared cosmopolitical perspective by these risks intimates the mutual implication of elite and subaltern cosmopolitan subjects; both are enmeshed in modernity—in different ways and to different ends—and, therefore, cannot be easily separated or theoretically isolated. Beck's notion of a cosmopolitical perspective parallels Hardt and Negri's notion of the multitude which

> is not unified but remains plural and multiple… is composed of a set of *singularities*—and by singularity here we mean a social subject whose difference cannot be reduced to sameness, a difference that remains different… The multitude, however, although it remains multiple, is not fragmented, anarchical, or incoherent… The multitude is an internally different, multiple social subject whose constitution and action is based not on identity or unity (or, much less, indifference) but on what it has in common. (99–100)

The multitude, like Beck's model of cosmopolitical risk and the subsequent creation of, what he terms, "subpolitics"—"politics outside and beyond the representative institutions of the political system of nation-states" ("World Risk Society" 18)—demands new ways of theorizing cosmopolitanism. Namely, it demands a shift from the emphasis on identity politics that has heretofore dominated cosmopolitan theory of many different stripes to thinking of cosmopolitanism as a subpolitical model of global interconnection. In other words, to move beyond characterizing "elite" and "subaltern" cosmopolitan subjects (and the possibilities or lack thereof either group might pose) and imagining their

interaction in a global system and the forms of cosmopolitical responsibility this requires.

This necessary imagining is the site at which the contemporary cosmopolitan novel might be the most useful. This perhaps seems obvious: what do novels do most but imagine? I am suggesting, however, that this imagining done by cosmopolitan novels fills a crucial gap in cosmopolitan theory as it is presently performed. The genre limits of theoretical and philosophical work mean that they often can only go so far is discussing what cosmopolitan responsibility might look like. Fiction—fortunately or not—is held to different generic expectations; the cosmopolitan novel can imagine a new world. Further, novels form part of the larger cultural discourse that informs how we as readers understand and organize the world-–what Raymond Williams calls "structures of feeling" and what Edward Said calls "structures of attitude and reference." Susan Stanford Friedman notes that, echoing Fredric Jameson, "narrative is a window into, mirror, constructor, and symptom of culture… cultural narratives encode and encrypt in story form the norms, values, and ideologies of the social order" (8). Indeed, Bush herself notes that "fiction for me has to be a way of engaging with the world around me, with both public and private worlds—rather than an escape from this. I feel this urge towards engagement both as a compulsion and a kind of responsibility" (96). This sense of compulsion and responsibility is connected to literature's theoretical role, but it also marks out its possible popular impact. Narrative shapes (or assists in shaping) the conditions of possibility that make cosmopolitanism a widely viable sensibility to adopt.[4]

As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri note, however, "in each era… the model of resistance that proves to most effective turns out to have the same form as the dominant models of economic and social production" (68). With this in mind, as well as Beck's insistence on the centrality of risk to advanced modernity, how do novels imagine new forms of resistance to dominant models that produce consumers rather than citizens, fear rather than action? While there are, inevitably, a near infinite number of ways that novels might address these questions, *Rules of Engagement* provisionally answers them by embracing risk as a way of addressing one's responsibility to global others. Melissa Orlie suggests

that "we live responsibly and freely when we put our identities in question and refuse merely and passively to reinscribe … the effective rule of the social, the predictable ordering of the self as subject" and, thus, "to live responsibly and freely… requires that we disrupt and unsettle social rule because when we do not, we reinforce and expand the 'necessities' that not only harm others, but also constrict the power of our own action" (339). What Bush argues, then, in *Rules of Engagement* is that, to ignore or resist the risks of modern life, is to reinscribe social rule—particularly a form of social rule that enforces the invisibility of its human externalities.

Thus, while Arcadia ostensibly faces legal risks in transporting passports, the true risk is the continued invisibility of Basra and others like her. Early in the novel, Arcadia states that "I'm a theorist. I hardly need to race about the globe. Besides, I value safety. And here in London I've found a sort of safety" (27). Though, as John Ball notes, "London can provide temporary escape, anonymity, and seclusion, but eventually its cosmopolitanism will not only enable access to the wider world but enforce engagement with it" (84). While Arcadia's statement establishes an unnecessarily rigid (and false) distinction between theory and practice, it can also be read as the justification of a relatively self-serving refusal to act, to take risks. Nonetheless, this statement contains a surface rationality: Who would reasonably choose risk over safety? The very common sense of the statement reveals its investment in hegemonic ideologies about the responsibility of middle-class Westerners to the rest of the world; compare it, for instance, to Appiah's injunction that cosmopolitan responsibility means "if you are the person in the best position to prevent something really awful, and if it won't cost you much to do so, do it" (161). Appiah's maxim suggests a vision of responsibility that, as Bruce Robbins notes, is "rather minimal" ("New and Newer" 58) and that mostly acts to exonerate upper middle class Westerners of any guilt they might feel about their own privilege.

Risk, Responsibility and the Self
While *Rules of Engagement* foregrounds the necessity of a risky responsibility, it simultaneously suggests that the ability to take this kind of

responsibility is not the same for everyone. Indeed, what the novel posits is the way that responsibility to oneself and others is a fluid thing; sometimes the self must take priority over others and vice versa. For, while Arcadia's self-preserving choices are posed as equally selfish and necessary, Basra's and Amir's (the Iranian man with whom Arcadia becomes romantically involved) decision to escape politically tenuous situations without their families is viewed much less ambivalently and more positively. Such ambivalence suggests a nuanced view of global risks. Rather than arguing that responsibility means either always prioritizing others or self-protection (both straw-man positions), Bush allows for the complicated relationship between the self and others in a global risk society.

Further, in the narratives surrounding both Basra and Amir, Bush connects the individual risks they take repeatedly to the risks created by neoliberal modernity: "as a rule, the choice to become or remain a 'foreigner' is not freely made but is the consequence of poverty and hardship, of flight from persecution or an attempted escape from starvation" ("Cosmopolitical Realism" 134). Yet as Beck suggests, "what we now see [in late modernity] are unlimited risks and uncertainties that are much harder to identify (like transnational terrorism, climatic disasters, contested water resources, migration flows, AIDS, genetically modified foods, BSE, and computer viruses able to cripple civil and military communications)" ("Cosmopolitical Realism" 146–47). The early risks Amir takes are not entirely of his own making (this parallels Basra's situation which I discussed above). He, as a student in Iran, applies for a visa to study in England—an application that seemed to signal "that he wanted to flee into the embrace of the West, *when really, what I wanted was merely to travel, to be cosmopolitan, which is not the same as wanting to be Westernized, even though people so often act as if it is*" (113; emphasis in original). His response suggests a kind of youthful naivete about what constitutes risk. After being denied both a student and exit visa, Amir is incarcerated for six months. On his release, he escapes Iran:

> Amir was the one who followed the leads, the whispered voices, met burly men in coffeehouses who talked into their coffee and threatened terrible retribution on all his family if he gave any

of their secrets away. He managed to scrabble together enough money for a midpriced escape, which was substantial, but the cheapest sort apparently meant days of walking and was so dangerous you might as well give up anyway. For the price he paid he was told he'd get an escape that involved only a few hours on foot. (114)

Amir, while helped by others, must here place responsibility for the self over that of others (family, friends, etc.); responsibility for others is deferred. And, as his participation in the acquiring and alteration of passports for refugees suggests, this is a responsibility the novel shows him taking up.

The risks Amir takes in leaving Iran are substantial but are, for the most part, not entirely chosen freely: he leaves, not because he has a strong desire to leave but because the political situation makes it untenable for him to remain. Again, as he states, he does not desire to become Westernized but, instead, to become cosmopolitan. Amir's choice to become a "foreigner," then, is not really a choice at all but the consequence of political persecution. While his situation is specific—Iran under the mullahs—it does not emerge in a global vacuum.

However, while Bush suggests the importance of self-preservation/responsibility to the self with Amir and Basra, she also points, through Arcadia's career path, to the way the rhetoric of self-preservation can be used to elide one's responsibility to others. The novel repeatedly draws our attention to the fact that Arcadia is neither a war correspondent nor a scholar who partakes in fieldwork. This distinction between correspondent/active scholar and the work Arcadia does is repeatedly framed in terms of risk, safety and gender: female war correspondents are "permitted to be fascinated by war while trailing the allure of those who thrive in dangerous situations. They're women who race through sniper fire gathering stories about human suffering, who manage to win the confidence of hot-blooded, sex-starved young men brandishing AK-47s" (15–16). Arcadia here portrays—however self-servingly—risk as the work of glamorous ingenues who use, even exploit, their sexuality in service of a scoop. Indeed, the war correspondents—male and

female—who populate *Rules of Engagement* do not seem far removed from a romanticized version of World War Two-era war correspondents. And while war correspondents are framed as active participants in the work of making visible invisible conflicts, the intimation is that they undertake risk for the sake of risk; Arcadia's fears about her own investment in ensuring Basra's safety resonates with the text's attitude towards war correspondents and others like them: "I wondered if this was simply selfishness masking itself as altruism, a kind of mania in which I ultimately had my own interests at heart" (187). The conflation of risk and selfishness here points to the necessity to not presume about the endpoint of risk behavior; that accepting risk is not necessarily a cosmopolitan act; "Bush's novel posits that histories of engagement, whether between individuals or nation-states, need to be more completely, and complexly, acknowledged" (Authers 793).

Yet while the war correspondents of the novel are presented as solipsistically risky, Arcadia's refusal to take risks is hardly valorized. The description of the office she works out of reveals the ironically isolated nature of the work she does—despite its global connections:

> These rooms are our shell, the carapace that hides the telecommunication lines and fiber-optic cable and complex binary codes that store our information and connect us to each other, to colleagues, and to conflicts around the globe. We cross borders with ease this way, even though the computers are chained to bolts in the floor and the red eye of an alarm system blinks high on one wall. (15)

The juxtaposition between the mobility of information and the immobility of infrastructure (anchored to the floor and protected against theft) is paradoxical; risk is studied but studiously avoided. Further, as Arcadia later reveals, the study of risk can be a way of simply deferring responsibility: "given that you can't act everywhere, do everything, just as you can't intervene in all conflicts, you have to determine your zones of responsibility. That's what we grapple with in intervention studies. You have to choose where you're going to take your risks, set limits. As you travel from zones of safety into zones of danger. That's what makes

risk meaningful" (190). Is responsibility then about taking the most studied, most prepared course of action? Or is it in the acting itself? Bush, therefore, raises questions about what cosmopolitan risks entail and under what circumstances they might be taken. Notably, however, even in Arcadia's list of the reasons to avoid taking risks prematurely, the question of responsibility is central—suggesting that risks must be taken, especially by those who can.

Nonetheless, *Rules of Engagement* ultimately emphasizes the importances of taking cosmopolitan risks—risks that acknowledge or emerge out of global interconnection. This gets beyond the acceptance of difference that characterizes much of the discourse surrounding cosmopolitanism. If, as Robbins suggests, "the term *cosmopolitanism* is ordinarily taken to [refer to] aesthetic spectatorship rather than political engagement" (*Feeling Global* 17; emphasis in original) then emphasizing cosmopolitan risk-taking might be one way to reframe cosmopolitanism in terms of political engagement. Yet, *Rules of Engagement*—and, perhaps, cosmopolitan novels more broadly—suggest the impossibility of separating the aesthetic from the political—particularly the affective impact of the aesthetic. And this impact implies (as Lauren Berlant suggests) "a social relation between spectators and sufferers, with the emphasis on the spectator's experience of feeling compassion and its subsequent relation to material practice" (1). As Hardt argues, affects "illuminate… both our power to affect the world around us and our power to be affected by it, along with the relationship between these two powers" (ix).[5] Arcadia's interactions with Basra—and her remembered interactions with Evan and Neil, the two young men who fight a duel over her—are deeply personal and affective. Yet this affective response is what prompts her more-active political engagement. While she tries to contain her experiences with Evan and Neil in the past, and her connection with Basra as strictly academic, Arcadia is unable to act. Once she appropriately mourns Evan and Neil and acknowledges her personal relationship to Basra's situation, then she is able to take the risks required of a responsible cosmopolitical subject.

Indeed, part of the question of responsibility in *Rules of Engagement* is resisting the enticements of global voyeurship—something that too

much emphasis on careful deliberations and research can become (at least in this novel; this is certainly an arguable assertion). Bush depicts the rhetoric of cautious platitudes that reveals the common-sensical aspect of it, challenging the neutrality of safety: Arcadia asserts that "sometimes I'd like to believe… that being informed, that knowledge is an end in itself, that one is justified simply in knowing what's going on in the world… When we're all these global voyeurs, really, watching endless television clips of atrocities—how are we to make sure we don't all collapse into utter passivity" (110)? The connection Bush establishes between information and voyeurism raises questions about the potential limits to liberal programs of cosmopolitanization that emphasize the exposure to different cultures as key to cosmopolitan subjecthood: is exposure/experience enough? Particularly for already privileged Western subjects like Arcadia? The novel, therefore, raises important questions about what cosmopolitanism can—and should—look like. While Arcadia is the protagonist of the novel, she also points to some of the willful blindness of elite cosmopolitan subjects (many of whom make up the audience of a novel like *Rules of Engagement*). However, rather that reject cosmopolitanism as an inherently corrupted category, the novel points to ways of bringing critical theoretical models into practice—arguing for the importance of thinking through a risky cosmopolitics.

Notes

1 This is a preoccupation common to Bush's three novels. For a discussion of risk in her first novel, *Minus Time*, see MacKinnon 2006.

2 Her name and Arcadia's are similarly culturally unique; names given by similarly imaginative fathers.

3 One of the tactics of these groups is using Western volunteers as witnesses to violence that might often remain globally invisible without their presence. Rachel Corrie was one of the more prominent members of such groups.

4 While my focus here is on novels, this is a role that could (potentially) be performed by any kind of cultural product.

5 Yet, as Berlant further argues, "the modern social logic of compassion can as easily provide an alibi for an ethical or political betrayal as it can initiate a circuit of practical relief" (11).

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