

Book Reviews

Katherine Hallemeier. *J. M. Coetzee and the Limits of Cosmopolitanism*.
New York: Palgrave, 2013. Pp. 201. US\$90.

Well-known for his preoccupation with ethical questions about responsibility to and interaction with others, J. M. Coetzee offers one of the most intriguing archives for critics of cosmopolitanism to consider. Katherine Hallemeier's *J. M. Coetzee and the Limits of Cosmopolitanism*, focused on his recent fiction (beginning with 2007's *Boyhood*), provides a thorough examination of Coetzee's engagement with a variety of forms of cosmopolitanism. Hallemeier offers a persuasive argument for reading Coetzee's later fiction as interventions into contemporary debates about the nature of cosmopolitanism and, particularly, its ethical implications.

The book begins by outlining two ways of categorizing current theorizations of cosmopolitanism and their links to sympathy: "rational cosmopolitanism" and "affective cosmopolitanism." The first posits "that sympathy supplements reason" while the second "imagines that sympathy is extrarational" (16). Both are "similar insofar as they envision a perfect human sympathy that is never interrupted by the shame of misunderstanding or inequality" (17). In her examination of cosmopolitanism and its enactment in Coetzee's fiction, Hallemeier notes that Coetzee critiques these models through a suggestion that paranoia can undergird the privileging of rationality while an emphasis on the affective can uncritically reinforce gender stereotypes. Hallemeier goes on to identify another strand of cosmopolitan thinking in which shame might offer a useful interruption of "this vision of sympathy [as] dramatically utopian" by "envision[ing] a cosmopolitanism that admits to the possibility of experiencing the self-as-other" (97–98). Yet as Hallemeier illustrates through Coetzee's exploration of the "limited cosmopolitan potential of shame" (100), shame is not without its similarly utopian aspirations for emotion and its ethical potential.

This analysis of the role of sympathy and shame in current cosmopolitan theory (roughly the first three quarters of the book) offers a thorough overview of the field and its variety of approaches to both affect and universality. For those who are new to this body of theory or those who would appreciate an outline of many of the key approaches to cosmopolitanism, this part of the book will prove very helpful. At the same time, Hallemeier demonstrates how fiction might provide a useful additional voice in the critical debates sur-

rounding the forms cosmopolitan practice might take, “experiment[ing] with the possibility that thinking through an idea across different genres enables conversations that are incommensurable [approached differently but with shared priorities] yet complementary” (16). This cross-disciplinary approach helps to both highlight the complex ways that authors engage with the world and encourage critics to resist seeing literature as case studies to which theory can be applied.

The last quarter of the book, however, is especially exciting. While the first three quarters of the book are useful and lucid, this final shift in Coetzee’s approach to cosmopolitanism, thinking alongside Derridean cosmopolitan hospitality, signals a particularly compelling addition to current cosmopolitan thought. Hallemeier’s conceptualization, via Coetzee, of a “nonhuman cosmopolitanism” reverses both Derrida’s and Kant’s focus on the host as the agent of cosmopolitan hospitality, directed toward the guest. Instead, she suggests that “the cosmopolitan subject might be delineated, not by identifying how he or she feels toward others in seemingly human(e) ways, but rather by considering how he or she remains apart from others, and may even appear to others as nonhuman, despite feeling strongly towards them” (127). As she goes on to argue, “the encounter with another is not cosmopolitan in itself. Rather, the encounter becomes cosmopolitan through the acknowledgement that one is not owed a welcome” (150). Hallemeier’s suggestion that cosmopolitanism emerges out of “adhering to others’ conditions for living” offers an intriguing counterpoint to cosmopolitan theory’s tendency to (not always self-consciously) repeat a colonial gesture that posits Western ideals as invisibly and neutrally universal (155). “Nonhuman cosmopolitanism,” as posited in Hallemeier’s book, puts the cosmopolitan subject always in the position of visitor. Yet while Hallemeier notes the postcolonial implications of this reworked cosmopolitanism, her focus on Coetzee’s work does introduce some limits on this point given that, in his later fiction in particular, Coetzee’s narrators are generally of European descent. How does this position of always-already visitor shift when the subjects are ones who cannot generally take for granted their role as host, being subjects who must already accede to “others’ conditions for living”? Since Hallemeier focuses on Coetzee’s work alone, this question remains outside the book’s scope. Nonetheless, this is a compelling reframing of cosmopolitan thought and signals an important addition to the body of literary criticism on cosmopolitanism.

Emily Johansen