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Open/Closed Cities: Cosmopolitan melancholia and the disavowal of refugee life

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It has long been recognised that nationalism is predicated on structures of disavowal, on a strategic forgetting of those aspects of a national culture that interrupt the purity of its nostalgic self-image. Cosmopolitanism has often been posited as an antidote to this disavowal, as a way of rendering the nation state more open both to internal and external difference. But what if cosmopolitanism itself turned out to be structured by occlusions and disavowals, what if its posture of openness turned out to hide internal exclusions that render certain lives and deaths ungrievable? My thesis is that the unfreedom of the refugee is the melancholy shadow at the heart of cosmopolitan freedom, that the cosmopolitan world view is reliant on structures of global privilege that function to occlude the refugee's experience of destitution.

In psychic terms, refugee experience is encrypted within cosmopolitan consciousness as a disavowed memory of loss. Exceeding individual histories, this memory is as much historical as it is personal: statelessness is an ever-present threat or potentiality, a loss of status and rights that is always happening to someone and that some day, any day, may happen to me. What is traumatic or unavowable here is the vulnerability not of the stateless but of the citizen, the possibility of her own potential ejection from the realm of privilege. The precarity of refugee life is unavowable for cosmopolitanism precisely because it threatens to reveal the precarity of the citizenship which underwrites cosmopolitan privilege, the ease with which, as Hannah Arendt and Giorgio Agamben have underlined, a citizen can become a non-citizen (Arendt 1941; Agamben 2008). And beyond this disavowal of the refugee as the unassimilable image of the citizen's own vulnerability, refugee life is also disavowed because the cosmopolitan's lifestyle is sustained by local and global structures of exploitation that never cease turning other citizens into non-citizens: regardless of the cosmopolitan's desire to open herself to the world, she is implicated in statelessness simply by virtue of belonging to a sovereign, and thus more or less exclusionary, state. This double disavowal of vulnerability and implication simultaneously binds and blinds cosmopolitanism to refugee life.

My debt to the work of Judith Butler throughout this essay will be obvious. In *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable*?, she writes: 'An ungrievable life is one that cannot be mourned because it has never lived, that is, it has never counted as a life at all' (2009: 38) Her project, as I read it, is to render such lives grievable by insisting on what she describes as our 'common corporeal vulnerability' (2004: 42)). While such a desire is, of course, admirable, there is a danger that rendering refugee life grievable turns the refugee into the transparent, pathos-laden object of humanitarian concern without disturbing the structures of privilege that continue both to produce and occlude statelessness. I obstinately insist on the non-grievability of refugee life in the hope that we might turn cosmopolitan melancholia into a critical awareness of cosmopolitanism's structural limits, a shift that I describe as critical cosmopolitan melancholia. This slightly ungainly locution is meant to signal that there is no Archimedean position outside of cosmopolitanism where we might encounter the refugee on her own terms, that the best we can hope for is an auto-critical account of the vexed relation between cosmopolitanism and refugee life.

In what follows, I compare the self-evident disavowals that structure the exclusionary discourses of nationalism with the less evident disavowals that structure the seemingly inclusionary discourses of cosmopolitanism. I then distinguish between a normative, liberal cosmopolitanism that disavows its own limits in its assumption that refugee life is knowable and hence mournable and a cosmopolitan melancholia for which refugee life remains ungrievable. In the second section I offer a brief analysis of how cosmopolitanism has fallen out of favour in postcolonial studies, comparing Homi Bhabha's cosmopolitan critique of nationalism (1990) with Simon Gikandi's critique of postcolonialism as a form of cosmopolitan elitism that has 'nothing in common' with refugee life (2010). Gikandi's performance of postcolonialism's non-relation to the refugee prepares the way for my third and final section, a reading of Teju Cole's extraordinary 2011 novel, *Open City*, as an example of how refugee life is encrypted within cosmopolitan privilege: while the narrator, Julius, displays all the aphasic symptoms of cosmopolitan melancholia, the novel itself is an exercise in *critical* cosmopolitan melancholia in so far as it exposes the disavowed (and in this case, transgenerational) memory of 'absolute destitution' (Cole 2011: 80) at the heart of Julius' life of privilege and his violently gendered implication in the unworlding of others. The proper role of cosmopolitan aesthetics is thus, I

argue, not simply to solicit sympathy for the plight of the refugee but to effect an auto-critical exposure of cosmopolitanism's implication in the global structures of oppression and exclusion that produce statelessness.

Structures of disavowal: from national to cosmopolitan melancholia

Ernst Renan famously argued that 'forgetting is a crucial factor is the creation of a nation' (Renan 11). Nationalism depends upon a collective script that leaves out anything that threatens to disrupt the fragile unity of the nation's history. This amnesia can all too easily translate itself into xenophobia. The rise of Trump, Brexit, and far right nationalism across Europe are belated attempts to preserve the unity of the nation by erecting various defences against the outside, from economic protectionism to limitations on immigration and the expulsion of those who have failed to secure legitimate citizenship. The present wave of British nationalism is a mutation of what Paul Gilroy once diagnosed as postimperial melancholia: 'The life of the nation has been dominated by an inability even to face, never mind actually mourn, the profound change in circumstances and moods that followed the end of Empire and consequent loss of imperial prestige' (2004: 98). This dangerous denial of Britain's implication in imperial structures of exploitation then makes it possible for a kind of imperial nostalgia to develop, evident in the Brexiteer slogan ''Make Britain Great Again,' which seems curiously aphasic in relation to exactly what it was that made Britain great in the first place. While the racism of Empire is disavowed, racism directed towards those who have migrated to Britain from the ex-colonies is legitimated by a fear that Britain is losing its 'coherent and distinctive [white] culture.' The idea of a return to Britain's former greatness is only rendered compatible with the isolationism of the 'little Englander' by forgetting the expansive, even cosmopolitan, designs of empire.

This contradictory relation to the era of nation state imperialism goes hand in hand with a disavowal of the present era of globalisation, in which the territorial sovereignty of the nation state has been (at least partially) replaced by the deterritorialising sovereignty of capital (Hardt and Negri 2000). What Tabish Khair usefully dubs 'the new xenophobia' is coterminous with the era of finance capital. Just as capital itself now moves *invisibly* and without any border controls, the movement of labour has become increasingly *visible* and subject to various forms of control. Financial globalisation threatens

national sovereignty and limits the ability of governments to defend their economies, but the anxiety generated by this increasing vulnerability is projected not onto capital but onto labour, onto the bodies whose movement is the symptom rather than cause of globalisation.

It is no coincidence that the financial crisis triggered by the 2007 banking collapse was closely followed by the so-called refugee crisis. While migrants and refugees are produced by a variety of factors, ranging from global economic inequities through to political and religious persecution, war, famine, the collapse of state infrastructures and environmental degradation, the 'refugee crisis,' *as an affective phenomenon of Europe,* or more broadly the global North, has as much to do with an anxiety about national sovereignty in an era of globalisation as it does with any net increases in the actual numbers of migrants and people seeking asylum. Anxieties produced by the mobility of capital are displaced onto anxieties about the mobility of labour. Political arguments about the need to regain national sovereignty focus on controlling the movement of migrants as a way of disavowing the state's inability to protect its own citizens from the depradations of global capitalism. Agamben, parsing Arendt, notes that 'the citizens of advanced industrial states demonstrate . . . an evident propensity to turn into denizens, into noncitizen permanent residents, so that citizens and denizens – at least in certain social strata – are entering an area of potential indistinction' (2008: 94). It should come as no surprise that the Brexit campaign, like the Trump campaign, appealed most to those in this 'zone of indistinction,' those in the lowest social strata, whose economic and political precarity renders them indistinct from the very migrants they voted to keep at bay (Becker, Fetzer and Novy 2017).

If contemporary nationalism is predicated on a complex series of disavowals, its cosmopolitan counterpart also contains its own lacunae. The first of these is the extent to which human rights law is radically dependent on the nation state. Kant's 1795 declaration of a Cosmopolitan Law or Right concerning the just treatment of strangers, a declaration that was later to inspire the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, must reach back into pre-history in order to make its claim: '*Originally*, no one had more right than another to a particular part of the earth' (n.p. my italics). Once history begins, and especially the history of the nation state, then questions of justice and hospitality become radically attenuated. The conditions of universal hospitality are subordinate to the laws of sovereignty, such that the stranger, even for Kant, may lay claim only to 'the right to temporary

sojourn,' a right to a non-hostile reception that can itself be waived 'when this can be done without causing his destruction.'

These limits to hospitality are at the bottom of cosmopolitan melancholia. Cosmopolitanism's sense of responsibility for others inevitably tips over into an irreducible or originary guilt. Not only is the hospitality one might offer to another necessarily limited, but there will be always be other others to whom one might have offered hospitality: 'Guilt is inherent in responsibility because responsibility is always unequal to itself: one is never responsible enough' (Derrida, 1995 [*The Gift of Death] 51*). Fortress Europe, ~~of course,~~ turns this originary guilt into an alibi for inhospitality. The state's resources, we are repeatedly told, are finite, and even if we accept this or that stranger's right to asylum, then there will always be others whose entrance we must refuse—indeed, the more asylum seekers we accept, runs the logic, the more will come. Liberal cosmopolitans can critique this cynical bad faith, but they can never quite escape what Roberto Esposito describes as the 'constitutively melancholic character of community' (2013: 30), generated by the gap between the impulse towards openness and the necessarily limited nature of any given instantiation of community.

The paradigmatically cosmopolitan space of the city thus swings compulsively between openness and closedness. As Esposito argues, the *polis* emerges from the twin impulses of *communitas* and *immunitas*. The Latin word *munus* refers the self outside of itself to an infinite 'debt, duty or obligation' to others (2013: 3): communities are *com* (with) *munus*, formed through a common recognition of this *munus*. But communities are also formed through a negation of this *munus,* a limiting of those to whom one has an obligation or duty. Passing from the original Latin legal understanding of immunity as immunity from prosecution or taxes to the late 19th Century medical understanding of immunity as the ability to protect the organism from contagion, immunity comes to signify a defence system necessary to the survival of community, a system designed to protect the body politic from foreign bodies always already understood to be harmful, even while biological immunity is often paradoxically achieved through inoculation, through the controlled intake of foreign matter.

Nationalism can be readily understood as a hostile immune reaction, as an attempt to close down the borders of the body politic. But what if cosmopolitanism were also a kind of immune reaction, an

attempt to present oneself as open to the world precisely in order to immunise oneself against the traumatic knowledge of cosmopolitanism's own structural inadequacy? Cosmopolitanism here becomes a mode of self-styling that wards off the traumatic knowledge of others' suffering precisely by producing a self-image of humanitarian engagement. The classically cosmopolitan figure of the philanthropist works to mask implication in the very suffering it seeks to relieve.

The reaction of those who voted 'remain' to the result of the Brexit referendum pitted the cosmopolitanism of city dwellers against the assumed parochialism and xenophobia of those who inhabited small towns and villages. There was even a brief 'Londependence' movement that sought to disaffiliate from the rest of the country (despite the fact that all of the UK's major cities voted, often by narrow margins, to remain). Theresa May's speech of 4th October 2016 in turn sought to disaffiliate Britain from the cosmopolitan ideal: 'But if you believe you're a citizen of the world, you're a citizen of nowhere. You don't understand what the very word 'citizenship' means' (May, 2016).

Jem Eskenazi wrote to the *Financial Times* in protest:

Anybody with an ounce of intelligence understands that climate change, pollution or epidemics know no frontiers, that extreme poverty in one region has stability implications for the whole world; that terrorism is a global problem with global solutions; that wars are not started by citizens of the world but narrow-minded people with a blind belief of [sic] their superiority; that some of the greatest minds in any society are descendants of immigrants and refugees.

Citing a poll in which more than half of Britain 'saw themselves more as global citizens than a citizen of [their] country', Eskenazi protested that May had rendered half the UK population citizens of nowhere. The problem with Eskenazi's response, like that of the Londependence movement, is that he speaks from within an uninterrogated position of cosmopolitan privilege, as a *beneficiary* of globalisation.[1] It should come as no surprise that Eskenazi is an international banker. As Craig Calhoun points out, capitalism is itself a form of cosmopolitanism and liberal versions of

[1] Bruce Robbins' recent book, *The Beneficiary* (2017), argues for a 'redistributive cosmopolitanism' based on the recognition of who the beneficiaries of global capitalism are. Echoing my argument about the implication of the cosmopolitan in statelessness, Robbins argues for the recognition that 'your fate is causally linked to the fates of distant and sometimes suffering others' (3).

cosmopolitanism do little to challenge either local or global inequities (Calhoun 2003). Eskenazi positions himself against the 'narrow-minded people' who would deny entry to immigrants and refugees, but his pragmatic call for 'global solutions' stops short of a critique of global capitalism. His protest is that the Prime Minister has disenfranchised people such as himself who think in global terms, but this complaint erases, in a characteristically cosmopolitan gesture, the traces of those who are truly disenfranchised by the forces of globalisation.

Calhoun is part of a twenty-first century wave of critics for whom cosmopolitanism is implicated in globalisation and thus in structures of global inequality.[2] Cosmopolitanism consistently overlooks the intractable inequities of class. As Bruce Robbins bluntly puts it, 'cosmopolitanism as it is currently conceived has to do with a "receptive and open attitude towards the other". . . it does not have to do with economic redistribution between rich and poor' (2017: 41). There has, of course, been a series of attempts to articulate non-elite forms of cosmopolitanism, ranging from Homi Bhabha's 'vernacular cosmopolitanism' (1996) though to Paul Gilroy's 'convivial cosmopolitanism' (2004) and Silviano Santiago's 'cosmopolitanism of the poor' (in Robbins and Lemos Horta 2017). But these qualified forms of cosmopolitanism necessarily abandon the universal aspirations of cosmopolitanism, introducing the antagonisms of class and race that cosmopolitanism, as the Kantian precondition for world peace, must necessarily disavow.

As a universal aspiration, the fall from idealism to disillusion is preprogrammed into cosmopolitan thought. In a forthcoming article entitled ''About the End of the World: Towards a Cosmopolitanism of Loss'' Mariano Siskind performs this manic flip, replacing the optimistic claims of his 2014 book *Cosmopolitan Desires: Global Modernity and World Literature in Latin America* with the apocalyptic pessimism signalled by the title of his latest essay. Siskind argues that cosmopolitanism has lost its horizon of hope: all that remains is for cosmopolitans to mourn this loss of hope, or what he describes as the loss of the world itself, the loss of our capacity to imaginatively world ourselves either in the present or the future. He then goes on to prescribe a generalised mourning work, a mournful melancholia by which we might 'stay with' our loss of world (38).

[2] For an up to date survey of cosmopolitan theory, see Robbins' and Lemos Horta's introduction to *Cosmopolitanisms* 2017)

Siskind comes close to acknowledging my sense of the encrypted relation between cosmopolitanism and the refugee in his development of Kristeva's notion of the stranger within. He speaks of 'the refugee in me as the ungraspable, opaque unconscious that constitutes me as a subject of loss, the end of the world as the wound that splits me, but also as the super-ego's impossible demand to do something about it, about the suffering that structures the non-world' (15). However, Siskind ultimately wants to undo Freud's opposition between mourning and melancholia, while I want to insist on the classically melancholic or structurally unavowable nature of the relation between the cosmopolitan and the refugee. As Torok and Abram famously argued (1971), whereas mourning is a process of self-expansion through the introjection or metaphorisation of lost love objects (expansive in the sense that we transform the other into an assimilable memory), melancholia is a process of self-partition in which the other is incorporated within the subject as if within a crypt: no metaphorisation or symbolisation takes place that would allow the loss to be acknowledged and worked through. Instead 'cryptic incorporation marks an effect of failed or impossible mourning' (Derrida in Torok and Abram xxi).

Liberal cosmopolitanism can be described as operating according to the logic of introjection: an expansion of the self that constructs the refugee as a grievable, digestible object of pathos (e.g. Nussbaum 1998). What I am calling melancholic cosmopolitanism refuses this process of grieving, swallowing the refugee whole but in so doing setting up a cryptic space within the self where the refugee remains unmourned, undigested. For Derrida, this refusal of mourning is not simply pathological, as it was, at least initially, for Freud, but also has the potential to be ethical in so far as it respects the unknowablity or 'infinite remove' of the other (1986: 6). Derrida asks:

Is the most distressing, or even deadly infidelity that of a possible mourning which would interiorize within us the image, idol or ideal of the dead and lives only in us? Or is it that of the impossible mourning, which, leaving the other his alterity, respecting thus his infinite remove, either refuses to take or is incapable of taking the other within oneself, as in the tomb or vault of narcissism.' (1986: 6)

Much of the literature written in response to the refugee crisis is an imaginative interiorisation or introjection of the refugee into the realm of life.[3] Here we seem to get more or less direct access to refugee experience and the refugee seems to be included in the realm of grievable life by virtue of her common humanity or sameness. Such literature is laudable in many ways, but it has the unfortunate effect of overwriting Arendt's insistence on the refugee's exceptionality, her historical emergence as 'a new kind of human beings' whose non-citizenship leaves her without access to the realm of human rights, except by assimilation within a new regime of citizenship—in which case she is no longer a refugee (Arendt 1943). To recover the refugee as the fully human subject of human rights is to deny the ever-increasing numbers of people who live and die in the various states of inhuman limbo on which earlier sections of this volume have focused. An aesthetic response that wishes to remain faithful to Arendt and to statelessness itself needs to register the refugee as that which remains *constitutively ungrievable*, as the non-citizen whose fate forever shadows the life of the citizen. Everything depends, then, on whether or not the artwork is able to register this shadow: cosmopolitan melancholia remains pathological in so far as it is unable to register refugee life but potentially ethical if is able to recognise its own failure of registration. And this self-critical recognition acquires a specifically political valency if it can recognise the way in which is its failure of registration is produced by the structures of state formation and global capital that underwrite the privileged lifestyle of the cosmopolitan and occlude the lives of the stateless. Following Ranjana Khanna's work on critical melancholia (2003), I describe this second form of awareness as *critical cosmopolitan melancholia*.

In my final section I will turn to Teju Cole's novel *Open City* (2011) as an exemplary instantiation of cosmopolitan melancholia, pathological at the level of a narrator who remains aphasic in relation to his class and gender privilege, but politically salutary, or critical, at the level of the novel itself, which exposes the aporias of the narrator and maps out the cryptological relation between cosmopolitan

[3] One immediately thinks of Dave Eggers' novel *What Is the What: The Autobiography of Valentino Achak Deng* (2006) and Eggers' problematic assumption that his friendship with Deng means that he is able to tell the refugee's story from the inside, in the first person. Kate Clanchy's *Antigona and Me* (2008) is more aware of the problem of ventriloquism in that the author recognises that she "couldn't pretend to imagine being her" and consequently elects to write "Not Antigona's story as it happened to her, but her story as it happened to me, as I heard it, as I researched it and imagined it, as it made me think; as it changed me (5).

privilege and the destitution of the refugee. However, before I embark on this analysis, I want to explore how, within my own discipline of postcolonial studies, cosmopolitanism has increasingly become the object of critique. More specifically, I want to trace how the postcolonial project has morphed from a cosmopolitan critique of imperial melancholia into an auto-critique of cosmopolitanism itself.

Baleful Postcoloniality

As Calhoun notes, 9/11 and the subsequent war on terror 'made the cosmopolitan ideals articulated during the 90s all the more attractive but their realization much less immanent' (87). A 2013 special issue of the journal *Biography* usefully summed up our contemporary moment as the era of 'baleful postcoloniality,' taking the adjective from Fredric Jameson's analysis of the effects and affects of late capitalism. Simon Gikandi's essay, 'Routes and Roots', published in 2010, a year before *Open City,* is very much of this baleful moment, a moment that was only to grow more baleful with the escalation of the so-called refugee crisis and the defensive responses that followed in its Gikandi's (self-)critique offers a striking contrast to Homi Bhabha's (in)famous essay 'DissemiNation' (1990), published twenty years earlier in that late or post-Thatcherite moment when oppositional or minoritarian forms of cosmopolitan community seemed much more viable.

For Bhabha, as for Gilroy, melancholia is a nationalist formation that has to do with the disavowal of (the loss of) empire, a melancholia which can be alleviated by a 'vernacular cosmopolitanism' that functions to force acknowledgement of Britain's imperial history and hybridise national culture (Bhabha 1996), or by the 'convivial cosmopolitanism' produced when 'mundane encounters with difference become rewarding' (Gilroy 2004: 75). By contrast, for Gikandi, cosmopolitanism itself appears as a melancholic formation, one that needs to recognise its own implication in structures of privilege and exclusion. The point is not that nationalism is no longer a melancholic formation but that the cosmopolitan position from which postcolonialists have sought to critique nationalism also turns out to be melancholic, cryptic, structured by disavowal.

Bhabha's intoxicated identification of himself as one of the migrants who have lived 'that moment of scattering . . . that in other times and other places, in the nations of others, becomes a time of

gathering' (291) occludes his own privilege as an academic soon to leave Britain for the wealth of the private US university. Gikandi, by contrast, recognises the gulf between his own privilege as an African born but US-based postcolonial academic and the unprivilege of the refugee. Bhabha famously presents the migrant as 'the mote in the eye of history, its blind spot that will not let the nationalist gaze settle centrally' (318). Gikandi, in a phrasing that silently adapts Bhabha's formulation, presents refugees as 'a mote in the eye of cosmopolitanism' (23). This shift is a striking index of the fate of cosmopolitanism in postcolonial studies. Bhabha celebrates the capacity of the worldly migrant to undo the parochial nationalism of the metropole. For Gikandi, cosmopolitanism is no longer a sign of subaltern community, but an elitist sign of non-community. While Bhabha's migrant actively *decrypts* nationalist melancholia in order to produce a more inclusive sense of community, Gikandi's refugee remains an encrypted, unreadable figure, excluded by cosmopolitanism's inability to undo the structures of privilege by which it is constituted.

Bhabha's essay ends with a partial reading of Salman Rushdie' *The Satanic Verses* (1988), in which an Indian film producer claims that 'the trouble with the English is that their history happened overseas, so they don't know what it means' (Rushdie qtd in Bhabha 343). The migrant is the return of this disavowed history, and Gibreel, a Bollywood movie star, takes it upon himself to incarnate, or *weaponise*, this return: 'These powerless English!—Did they not think their history would return to haunt them? "The native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor" (Fanon). He would make this land anew. He was the Archangel Gibreel—*And I'm back*'(Rushdie qtd in Bhabha 319). Bhabha fails to see that this dream of revenge remains just that, a dream, a hallucination. Gibreel's revenge is curiously benign—the cosmopolitanisation of Englishness takes the improbably *comic* form of a heatwave that Gibreel imagines will (among other things) banish British reserve, elongate love-making and improve footballers' close control (Rushdie 355). Britain does indeed experience a heatwave, but Rushdie's novel has a darker, more melancholic side that Bhabha's essay overlooks. Gibreel's hallucinations lead, as Fanon warns, to psychosis and he eventually commits suicide in a bid to escape his visions, while his double Chamcha gives up on his attempt to become a naturalised Englishman and returns home to India. The migrant remains

encrypted and disavowed by the metropolis and the dream of minority cosmopolitanism remains an unrealised fantasy.

The ensuing *fatwah* issued by the Ayatollah Khomeni in 1989 did not, of course, lead to any further decryption. Rushdie found himself the spokesperson for liberal cosmopolitanism and democratic values, while a civilisational gap appeared to open between the West and the East, fuelled by Samuel Huntingdon's thesis concerning the clash of civilisations (1993). The migrant suddenly gets overcoded as parochial, anti-modern and Muslim, as threat to Enlightenment values, and, eventually, as terrorist, while cosmopolitanism morphs into an aggrieved mode of defending Western values. In this sense *The Satanic Verses* is unwittingly prophetic: Gibreel's dreams of flying over London enacting the revenge of the native stands as a compelling augury of the attacks of 9/11 and 7/7, of 'blowback' and the subsequent 'war on terror.' The oxymoronic nature of this latter phrase and its bizarre assumption of the moral high ground continues to disavow the terror of colonial history. Sivanadam's celebrated aphorism, 'we are here because you were there,' needs to be updated in the light of the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria, and the various depradations of global capital that have rendered so many parts of the world uninhabitable 'death-worlds' (Mbembe 2003). We are here because you *have never ceased* to be there.

The war on terror, the financial crash and the emerging refugee crisis all contribute to Gikandi's melancholic relation to community. While Bhabha begins his essay with his own performative inscription into cosmopolitan community, Gikandi sets himself apart, positioning himself more critically as a would-be postcolonial flâneur, whose cosmopolitan identification with the crowd is only a pose, a delusional act of bad faith:

In a single afternoon, strolling down the streets of the cities that I love, Nairobi, Johannesburg, Accra, I pretend to be the postcolonial flaneur [. . .] But when I board the BA flight to London and New York, I find myself in the strange company of Somali, Ethiopian and Sudanese refugees under the sponsorship of Refugees International and other charities. These are the outcasts of the civil wars in Eastern Africa and they are encountering the modern metropolis for the first time. Beneath the new garbs provided by international charities, they carry with them the look and feel of the countryside and this is what brings out the simple truth that my liberal sensibilities find hard to countenance. *I*

have nothing in common with these people; we do not share a common critical discourse or set of cultural values. They are not the postcolonials with whom I have spent the last weeks, but strangers caught in the cracks of the failed state. (22 my italics).

The opposition Gikandi sets up between the cosmopolitan and the refugee, city and country, is hyperbolic, disavowing the possibility of cosmopolitan refugees and thus the very possibility of postcolonial community that Bhabha takes for granted.[4] Nevertheless, Gikandi is absolutely right, in the current parlance, to check his privilege, to contrast his freedom of movement with the forced migration of the refugee.

Gikandi articulates a form of cosmopolitan melancholia that echoes Siskind's lament for the lost ground of solidarity, the lost possibility of a shared imaginative world. For Gikandi, his fellow passengers, if they do succeed in gaining asylum in the Western metropole, are more likely to 'recreate locality' (i.e. ethnic enclaves) than seek out cross-cultural forms of community:

Journeys across boundaries and encounters with others do not necessarily lead to a cosmopolitan attitude. Increasingly, the journeys that lead refugees from the war zones of the global south, processes often prompted by the collapse of those archaic, yet real, loyalties that make cultural elites uneasy, do not lead to freedom from those loyalties but to their entrenchment. (24-5).

The examples he cites are an uncomfortable and not quite self-aware performance of cosmopolitanism's discomfort with certain forms of difference:

Indeed, even in the metropolitan spaces we perform our postcolonial identities . . . the existence of a mass of people who seem to hold on to what we consider archaic cultures (those who wear *burquas* in classrooms, or slaughter sheep in the tubs of suburban houses, or 'circumcise' their daughters in hidden alleys) seem to disturb the temporality of postcolonialism and the terms of its routing. (25)

While for Bhabha the temporality of postcolonialism was disruptive of modernity, for Gikandi, this temporality is itself disrupted by the (seemingly) archaic cultural values of certain migrants. Gikandi's

[4] Abdulrazak Gurnah goes to considerable lengths to emphasise this possibility of cosmopolitan refugees in his 2001 novel *By the Sea*, in which the refugee narrator is demonstrably more cosmopolitan than his parochial British hosts.

examples betray a highly problematic Islamophobia, but he remains acute in his analysis of how the cosmopolitanism of postcolonial intellectuals is implicated in class privilege:

Postcolonial elites are, by virtue of their class, position or education, the major beneficiaries of project of decolonization . . . [and] of the nationalism they would later come to scorn. Indeed, quite often, these elites profited (directly or indirectly) from the inequalities and corruption of the postcolonial state' (29)

As we shall see, Cole's narrator was a member of the Nigerian elite and his choice to attend a military style boarding school not only enables him to gain a scholarship to Bard College in New York, but also begins the process of undoing his ties to what Gikandi calls 'locality'. The peculiar privations of boarding school life will allow him to replace such local desires with a more appropriately cosmopolitan desire for the culture of the metropolis.

Gikandi's essay is worth staying with for one last passage:

I want to argue, then, that a discourse of cosmopolitanism remains incomplete unless we read the redemptive narrative of being global in a contrapuntal relation with the narrative of statelessness and, by reproduction, of locality, where we least expect it, in the metropolis. The refugee is the Other of the Cosmopolitan; rootless by compulsion, this figure is forced to develop an alternative narrative of global flows, functioning in a third zone between metropolis and ex-colony, producing and reproducing localities in the centres of metropolitan culture itself. (26).

While Bhabha's essay depicts the metropolis in the process of opening itself to the outside, of becoming cosmopolitan, Gikandi's essay depicts the city as a place that only seems to open itself to the outsider, as a cryptological formation in which subaltern ethnic groups—whether by desire or by state design—reproduce ethnic enclaves that fracture the possibility of inter-ethnic community. Much depends on what city one looks at and from whose perspective, but Gikandi's essay is salutary as the performance of a cosmopolitan *anxiety* about precisely what it means to be open to difference. Above all, it offers us a challenge: how might we conceive of a cosmopolitanism that includes those who may have no interest in the kinds of openness that cosmopolitanism habitually rehearses and which it assumes to be the indisputable marker of humanness? How might cosmopolitan aesthetics 'counter-focalise' itself (Spivak 2002), in order to render visible the 'contrapuntal narrative of statelessness?'

Open City

Teju Cole's novel, *Open City* (2011) links the anxieties generated by 9/11 to the emerging refugee crisis, as part of the same defensive, immunological structure. Part of the novel's originality is to present this defensive reaction as central to the consciousness of a narrator who is himself a migrant, born in Nigeria to a Nigerian father and a German mother but now resident in New York as a trainee psychiatrist. Julius embodies Gikandi's figure of the cosmopolitan, postcolonial *flâneur*, walking the streets of the city while remaining apart from the 'strange company' he encounters.

Open City has been read first as a model and then as critique of the liberal model of cosmopolitan sympathy. Literary reviewers such as James Woods identify with Julius, the novel's seemingly cosmopolitan narrator, because they share his own blind spots. His perambulatory paragraphs offer an erudite, meditative commentary on city life that led liberal critics to forgive his 'ordinary solipsism' (Woods, 2011: n.p.) and, like Julius himself, pass over in silence the accusation of rape that is levelled at him by Moji, the sister of a childhood friend, a rape which Julius himself claims to have no memory of at all. Subsequent critics, by contrast, take the rape as a cue to read the novel as a *critique* of cosmopolitan privilege (Dalley 2013, Hallemeier 2013, Krishnan 2015 , Vermeulen 2013). Such critics make use of Cole's public critique of humanitarianism[5] to excavate the ironic distance between narrator and author that early reviewers overlooked. In fact, we might read the novel as a mode of auto-critique analogous to Gikandi's critique of his own pretensions to postcolonial *flânerie*, an excavation of Cole's own cosmopolitan privilege as a New Yorker of Nigerian parentage who spent his childhood in Lagos, before, like Julius, attending university in the US. Cole dropped out of medical school to pursue a career in the arts, whereas Julius makes it through medical school but retains the kind of cosmopolitan aesthetic sensibility that Cole himself, at least to a degree, must share. Whereas early reviewers tend to conflate Cole with Julius in order to affirm their own cosmopolitan world view, later, broadly postcolonial, critics are keen to exaggerate the difference in order to advance their critique of cosmopolitanism. My reading of the novel as auto-critique suggests

[5] https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/

that there is no position external from cosmopolitanism from which the novel might be said to mount its critique.

The novel is the record of Julius' seemingly 'aimless wanderings' interspersed with some limited recollections of his upbringing in Nigeria. What Pieter Vermeulen dubs his 'aesthetic cosmopolitanism' manifests itself in a relation to other lives that is, like the cities he walks, simultaneously open and closed. On the one hand, Julius seems hyper-attentive, his attention turned outwards so that his diary-like entries are less the record of his interior life than the record of his immersion in the life of the city. On the other, Julius is a loner, capable of losing himself in a Mahler symphony but allergic to any form of political, especially racial, community. On the one hand, he is a compulsive recording device, a memory machine that seeks out the hidden histories of the cityscapes though which he walks. On the other, he seems to suffer from selective aphasia, ranging from the inconsequential forgetting of his ATM code to his failure to remember his rape of Moji during a drunken teenage party in Nigeria, and his inability even to recognise her when they meet again in New York a decade or so later. On the one he is constantly alive to the histories of barbarity that Walter Benjamin so famously claimed underwrite the history of civilisation, and on the other hand he seems dangerously unaware of his own history of barbarity.[6] His interactions with his environment are simultaneously impersonal and solipsistic, expansive and defensive, a historical materialist performance of remembrance and a carefully scored act of erasure.

In the novel's opening pages Julius stages himself, from the vantage of his high-rise apartment, as a kind of a kind of hyper-receptive diviner, watching out for bird migrations while listening to far off classical music stations on the internet: 'on the days when I was home earlier enough from hospital, I used to look out the window like someone taking auspices, hoping to see the miracle of natural immigration' (4). The Freudian slip from migration to immigration suggests that he is uneasy about his own process of immigration and naturalisation, that what he wants the birds' flight to confirm is not seasonal migration but permanent settlement, the 'miracle' of US citizenship.

[6] Byron Santangelo, earlier in this volume, makes a convincing case for the Benjaminian, or "constellatory," nature of Cole's aesthetic practice.

Julius is blissfully unaware of the ways in which the flyways of birds have been radically disrupted by the construction of skyscrapers (Berenstein 2015), imagining that the high rises might seem to [the geese] 'like firs massed in a grove' (4). His faux birds-eye view of the city has the effect of naturalising both New York and his own elevated vantage point. As in Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999), the narrative is heavily focalised through the eyes of a male rapist whose aesthetic education functions to elevate him above other people's suffering: although he leaves his high rise apartment to pace the streets, there is a sense in which part of him remains tuned in to 'far-off classical music stations' such that his very receptiveness functions as a mode of insulation from his immediate surroundings. Tellingly, he is haunted by Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* but makes no reference to *Disgrace,* published the same year as Coetzee's short story (1999). Both *Open City* and *Disgrace* reveal cosmopolitanism to be a heavily *focalised* world-view, one that we must counter-focalise, *pace* Gayatri Spivak, by listening to the irruptive testimony of women such as Moji. We only hear her testimony in indirect speech, and belatedly, after Julius has walked away from the party where she has delivered it, but neither Julius nor the reader are left in any doubt as to its authenticity. The problem comes in Julius' inability to respond to her accusation. Despite its air of authenticity, it remains 'someone else's version' of his life, a version in which he is the villain rather than the hero (243)—a line which echoes Lurie's daughter's accusation that Lurie cannot see himself as anything other than the 'main character' (Coetzee 1999: 198). Julius can admit the truth of Moji's story only as something external to his story of his life: 'each person must on some level take himself as the calibration for normalcy. . . We are not the villains of our own stories' (243). The flat, affectless tone that suggests to him the truth of her testimony is matched only by his own flatness of tone, his incapacity to respond other than though an ambulatory, aporetic prose that can only perform its own indirection, its symptomatic numbness.

Indeed, indirection is the motivating structure at the heart of *Open City*. Julius' walking is presented first as 'therapy', as 'a release from the tightly regulated mental environment of work' (7) and then as symptom, as something he finds himself 'compelled' to do for reasons that remain obscure to him. His wandering above ground is a 'reminder of freedom' in so far as Julius decides what direction to walk but as he enters the subway this volitional element becomes attenuated and he feels subject to a

more collective compulsion: 'I felt that all of the human race were rushing, pushed by a counterinstinctive death-drive, into movable catacombs . . . all of us re-enacting unacknowledged traumas' (7). This subterranean feeling of compulsion is at least partly explained when he finds himself 'no longer heading directly home' but instead to Wall Street, to Ground Zero, to 9/11 itself, as he derisively notes tourists have begun to refer to the site.

Although Julius claims to 'read Freud only for literary truths' (208), he deploys the Freudian distinction between mourning and melancholia, introjection and incorporation, in order to suggest that New Yorkers have cordoned off not simply Ground Zero but also their own losses: 'The neatness of the line we had drawn around 9/11 seemed to me to correspond with [the] kind of sectioning off [involved in melancholia]. . . The mourning had not been completed and the result had been the anxiety that cloaked the city.' (209). Despite diagnosing this anxiety, Julius himself cannot help but mimic it: he is one of the 'we' complicit in this sectioning off, even while his narrative compulsively draws resemblances between past and present.

But there is a more obscure trauma that underwrites Julius' wandering malady. Vermeuelen characterises Julius as more '*fugeur* than *flâneur'*, citing Ian Hacking's study of the 'mad travellers' of nineteenth century France who wandered far from home in what psychiatry came to describe as a 'dissociative fugue' (Vermeulen, 2015: 102). Hacking describes the fugeur's 'ambulatory automatism' as the flip side of [the flaneur's] newly won mobility (102). What motivates the fugeur's dissociative flight is precisely *the loss of home itself*: they flee out of an unacknowledged sense that their home can no longer provide the sense of security once associated with home—or indeed that they, as men, can no longer furnish their homes with this sense of security. In this sense the flaneur's wanderings are in fact continuous with those of the fugeur, in so far as the flaneur tries, and fails, to make himself at home in the modern metropolis: beyond their disparities in class and privilege, both are figures of an emasculated masculinity. What Cole makes clear, then, is not simply Hacking's thesis that the *fugeur* is the flipside of the *flâneur* but that the statelessness of the refugee is the flipside of the cosmopolitan privilege, that the former experience is encrypted with the latter.

Julius' wandering is also a symptom, an acting out, of his unmoored, estranged relation to his 'homeland,' Nigeria, and his own mother's and grandmother's estranged relationship to their

homeland, Germany. Just before he bumps into Moji in New York, he speaks of the past as 'mostly empty space, great expanses of nothing' and adds that 'Nigeria was like that for me, mostly forgotten except for those few things remembered with an outsized intensity' (154). What he remembers of Nigeria is not the rape but an episode of violent humiliation at boarding school, his father's funeral and his mother's attempts to talk to him about her childhood, about the 'absolute destitution' she and her mother had lived through in the immediate aftermath of the war (80). This is the last conversation they have together, and it leads to a silence that later becomes a 'rift that wouldn't heal' (81), as if Julius cannot tolerate the knowledge that behind his privileged upbringing lies an experience of destitution that he can neither own nor disown: '[Mother] had been born into an unspeakably bitter world, a world without sanctity. . . . Years later, long after we became estranged, I tried to imagine the details of that life. It was an entire vanished world of people, experiences, sensations, desires, a world that, in some odd way, *I was the unaware continuation of* (my italics 80). His realisation that his grandmother must have been raped by the Red Army in the aftermath of the war means he is indeed the genetic continuation of this bitter history, the grandson of rape and destitution, but he remains unaware of how this history has become cryptically inverted, his oma's experience of gendered vulnerability 'repeating' itself in his own history of sexual violence.

While he has no desire to reconnect with his mother or indeed Nigeria, he has an obscure desire to visit his grandmother or Oma, who may or may not still be living in Brussels. His connection to his Oma at first appears a perverse desire to connect to someone with whom his own parents seem to 'barely tolerate' (34). The only intimacy that he has ever shared with her is an hour on a trip to Olumo Rock in Yorubaland; while his parents climb the rock face Julius spends an hour 'commun[ing] almost wordlessly' with his Oma, who silently kneads his shoulder. His attempt to find her in Brussels is 'desultory' (101) and ends up consisting of more street wandering, and more random encounters with strangers. He fleetingly suggests that he, like a Rwandan woman he spots in a church, might be here in Belgium as 'an act of forgetting' (140). At one level his visit to Brussels is clearly an act of remembrance: his wandering traces the path of his oma's disappearance, the disappearance of her citizenship, and with it, his own: encrypted at the heart of his cosmopolitan *flânerie* is her experience of absolute destitution. But at another level his trip to Brussels is indeed an attempt to

forget, an attempt to forget his own violently gendered implication, as a rapist, in his grandmother's rape. In his rape of Moji he has unwittingly acted out the rape of his own oma. Like Oedipus, he is both perpetrator and victim of his own twisted family romance. Unlike Oedipus, he never quite reaches that moment of *anagnorisis* in which he recognise his complicity, never reaches that moment of insight into his own blindness in which Oedipus turns his wrath upon himself.

And this is the point at which we can distinguish between Julius' melancholic cosmopolitanism and the novel's *critical* melancholia. As we have noted, recent critics have read the novel as a critique of cosmopolitanism, taking Julius' blanking of Moji as a the cue to separate out narrator and novelist, the cosmopolitan wrapped up in his own privileged life and the postcolonial novelist who seeks to expose the violence that underpins that privilege. The difficulty in maintaining this distinction is that Julius himself is aware of certain forms of historical violence. What he remains unaware of, and what even recent critics have largely glossed over, is the 'subterranean' link between his rape of Moji and his oma's rape by the Russians in the aftermath of World War Two. This link suggests that his blanking of his own act of rape is an immunitary device, designed to shield him from the knowledge of the simultaneously precarious and implicated nature of his own privilege.

Browsing an exhibition of the Hungarian photo-journalist Martin Munkácsi, he comes across an image, 'at once expected and unexpected,' of Goebbels and Hitler, at the same time as a young couple that he takes to be Hasidic Jews. He recognises that he 'has no reasonable access to what being there, in that gallery, might mean for them' (154), but he has earlier had a conversation with a Berliner, presumably also a Jew but less identifiably so then the Hasidic couple, who left Germany in 1937. The man asked him if he has visited Berlin. Julius replies in the affirmative, adding that 'he enjoyed the city very much.' What he does not add is that 'my mother and my oma had been there too, as refugees near the end of the war, and that I was myself, in this distant sense, also a Berliner. If we had talked more, I would have told him only that I was from Nigeria, from Lagos (153). His 'distant' identification of himself as a Berliner must be kept at a distance, even from himself. The historical possibility that a citizen can suddenly find herself a refugee in her own country is, for Julius, a family secret, a traumatic knowledge encrypted in his very genes. Julius' distant identification of himself as a

citizen of Berlin is a withheld identification with the experience of the refugee, with the 'absolute destitution' of his mother and grandmother.

The novel's title, *Open City*, thus turns out to name not cosmopolitan hospitality but radical vulnerability, the possibility that the cosmopolitan might truly find herself a citizen of nowhere. Brussels is an uncanny double of New York, in so far as Brussels, in declaring itself an open city during WW2, avoided aerial bombardment, while New York, which made no such declaration of surrender, was attacked by Al Qaeda. Brussels thus becomes a peculiar augur of what has already happened to New York and Julius' compulsive pacing of both cities seems to mimic the actions of a psyche attempting to locate the source of its woundedness, of a city unable to fathom how its openness to the world has suddenly become an open wound. Just as New York is cloaked in anxiety there is a 'palpable psychological pressure in Brussels' (98) which Julius ascribes to racial tensions and 'voter discontent about immigration' (100). Brussels, New York and even Berlin are thus cities on the defensive, cities that carry memories of invasion and occupation.

Julius' melancholic identification with New York, Brussels and Berlin is an identification with cities that have ceased to offer the protection of the citadel, a disavowed identification with the *internal* failure of cosmopolitanism to offer refuge even to its own citizens. At bottom, it is not an identification with a metropolis that imagines itself under attack from a barbaric (anti-)civilisation (Al Qaeda) but rather a loss of faith in civilisation itself, what we might call a civilisational loss, whereby civilisation has revealed itself to be a front for barbarity.

It is this encrypted, or 'fenced off' identification with civilisational loss that structures his relationships with other characters in the novel. Many critics have accused Julius of being unable to form attachments but there a number of characters, only some of whom are his patients, towards whom Julius is drawn precisely because they offer him encrypted images of his own melancholia, of his own precarious citizenship: Professor Saito, a professor of English literature born in Japan, who commits medieval poetry to memory as a way of distracting himself from his internment as an enemy alien during world war two; V, a Delaware Indian historian who has written a book about the genocide of her fellow Native Americans, who consequently suffers from a depression that Julius is unable to alleviate and who eventually commits suicide; his black American friend who has escaped

an ‘appalling family background’ of broken homes, drug-fuelled insanity, internment and suicide to become an academic (203); M., a Turkish man who feels he ‘has to be responsible for the whole world’ (48) after his infidelity leads to the breakdown of his marriage; and Moji herself, whose growing attractiveness may very well be the woundedness that he himself has inflicted on her. All of these attachments are cryptic in the sense that they offer images of the unacknowledged precarity of his own privilege. M. and Moji offer more than this in so far as they also present him with an image of his own implication in the suffering of others—something which, as we have seen, he seems constitutively unable to acknowledge.

These identifications are matched by a similar number of *refused* identifications with those who lie outside the orbit of his precarious privilege: a Haitian shoeshine, a black taxi driver, a black post office worker and underground poet, a Liberian refugee who he visits and then neglects to visit in a detention facility in Queen’s, and women marching to reclaim the streets. All of these characters lay a claim on Julius that he cannot countenance either because they demand a compassionate attentiveness that he seems not to be able to afford (the shoeshine, the refugee) or because they seek a subaltern, oppositional form of solidarity that the disinterested universality of Julius’ cosmopolitanism (the African Americans, the women on the march). The most pivotal of these latter figures is a Moroccan migrant named Farouk whose intellectual ambitions were blocked by a racist Brussels university that refused to believe he could have written his MA thesis (128). Farouk is the rejected African that Julius himself might have been had he not had been Gikandi’s ‘beneficiary’ of postcolonial privilege, the kind of person who, from his position on the outside of Western civilisation, might sympathise with the 9/11 attacks rather than self-identify with its victims. Troubled by Farouk’s ‘rage and rhetoric’ (107), Julius sends him a copy of Kwame Anthony Appiah’s *Cosmopolitanism*, as if Appiah’s eloquent defence of liberal cosmopolitanism could defuse Farouk’s rage and ward off another attack on the West by one of Farouk’s more militant friends.

As I have suggested *Open City* does not build to a moment of anagnorisis or self-recognition. Nevertheless Julius’ wandering, the various ‘flights of memory’ that make up the novel’s structure (Vermeulen 82), has a number of bumpy endings, all of which attempt to jolt Julius out of his

complacency, to remind him (or at least the reader) of both his precarity the ease with which he too, like Farouk, might find himself on the outside looking in, and his implication.

His wandering is first brought to a halt by a mugging: two black men, with whom we had previously exchanged glances of 'quick solidarity' based on their mutual skin colour, pass him by without this gesture of recognition and then turn back to attack him (212). Although he 'trembles from the shock' afterwards, the incident does not give rise to any reflections on the motivations of his assailants or indeed any interest in their lives at all, although the chapter ends with his passing of an 'immigration crowd' (218)—a line of people queuing for documents that would legitimate their presence in the US)—and a 'cordoned off monument' to what was once an African burial ground (220). As he admits, 'he has no purchase on who those people were whose corpses lay . . . had been laid to rest beneath his feet' (220)-and the same could be said of the immigrants who, unlike him, do not have the security of American citizenship to fall back on. Like the monument, their lives remain 'cordoned off' from his.

The second moment in which his perigrinations would seem to come to a standstill is at a performance of Mahler's Ninth Symphony in Carnegie Hall. *Open City* follows the same seasonal movement of Julius' favourite Mahler eighth symphony, *Das Lied Von der Erde*, from Autumn to Spring, but where Mahler seeks to naturalise death as rebirth, Julius seeks to complete his own naturalisation as a US citizen, the securitisation of his cosmopolitan privilege, by taking up a lucrative position as a partner in a private practice. Mahler's late symphonies were 'prolonged farewells': he was obsessed with death and was to die of a heart condition a year after completing the Ninth. In addition, Mahler was an Ashkenazi Jew and both symphonies were composed after 'vicious politics of an anti-semitic nature saw him forced him out of his directorship of the Vienna Opera' (249). Julius does not return to this second point but we might say that the symphonies work through, or sublimate, two forms of abjection: Mahler's antisemitic rejection by Viennese society and his impending return to *der Erde*. Julius' reception of Mahler's symphony thus has the same cryptic structure as his relationship with Professor Saito and other precarious cosmopolitans. Before the symphony starts, he notes wearily that he is the only black person in the audience and he thinks of similar occasions when 'standing in line for the bathroom he gets looks that make him feel like Ota Benga, the Mbuti man who was put in the

Bronx zoo in 1906' (252). His own, usually muted, sense of racial abjection does not prevent him getting caught up, like the rest of the audience, in the performance. In the final movement, an elderly woman gets up and walks down the aisle 'as though she had been summoned and was leaving into death': 'One of her arms was slightly raised, as though she were being led forward by a helper—*as though I was down there with my oma*, and the sweep of the music was pushing us gently forward as I escorted her out into the darkness' (253 my italics). The symphony thus provides Julius with a resolution to his desire to locate his grandmother: a peaceful, graceful death in the midst of community is Julius' belated compensation for the destitution that she experienced as a refugee, his own role as 'escort' a kind of screen memory for the violent role that men such as himself played in her destitution.

This attempt to provide a serene, non-violent ending for his oma and a sublimation of his anxieties about his own belonging is immediately disrupted by his own violent abjection from the 'all-white space' of Carnegie Hall. He mistakenly leaves by an emergency exit which then slams shut behind him, leaving him clinging to a flimsy fire escape in the rain. Moments ago, he had been 'in God's arms and in the company of many hundreds of others,' in the grips of 'an impossible elation' (255), but he now finds himself ejected from this august company, on the 'unlit side' of aesthetic experience. Earlier, he described the elderly woman as 'moving so slowly that she was like a mote suspended inside the slow-moving music,' but through his identification with her as his oma, he too has become a kind of mote, of the sort that obscures the vision of nationalism for Bhabha and of cosmopolitanism for Gikandi: he looks up at the stars only to find that the 'starlight was unreachable because my entire being was caught in a blind spot' (256).

The phrasing recalls his earlier critique of psychiatry as 'caught in a blind spot so big that it had taken over most of the eye' (239): 'what are we to do when the lens through which the symptoms are viewed is itself symptomatic: the mind is opaque to itself and it's hard to tell where, precisely, those areas of opacity are' (238). Julius' critique of psychiatry cannot quite turn into self-critique, into an acknowledgement of his violent, and violently gendered, privilege and the blind spots that this privilege engenders: just before he discloses Moji's accusation of rape he argues, seemingly forgetting his earlier recognition of the mind's opaqueness to itself, that 'each person must, on some level, take

himself as the calibration point for normalcy, must assume that the room of his mind is not, cannot be, entirely opaque to him' (243). Satisfied that he has 'hewed close to the good', he finds it simply untenable that he could have raped her: not that he dismisses her testimony, delivered with the same 'accuracy' and 'flat affect' as his own narrative, but rather that he is completely unable to integrate the image of himself as a rapist into his own self-narrative.

The third ending to his wanderings comes as, like Melville's Ishmael, he is drawn to Manhattan's water's edge, to the islanded edge of civilisation, and finds himself invited to board a boat. The boat is a party cruise rather than a whaler, full of college-age revellers, that sails around the Statue of Liberty. Toni Morrison famously described the unfathomable whiteness of the whale as the moment when 'whiteness became ideology': Moby Dick incarnates not the savagery of nature but the savagery of 'white racial ideology' (1988: 141-2). The Statue of Liberty would seem to be a similarly opaque symbol of whiteness, a metaphor for the free world, for civilisation, that nevertheless violently impedes 'the miracle of natural immigration.'

The final passage deflects away, like so many passages before it, from his own registration of experience towards a more impersonal, historical registration, what we might call, following Freud, a *reminiscence*, that strange malady he judged peculiar to hysterics. To paraphrase: one night in 1888, 1400 dead birds were recovered from the foot of the statue and sold off to the city's milliners and fancy stores. After that, Colonial Tassin, who had military command of the island, puts a stop to this trade, decides that the carcasses would be 'retained for the services of science' and then sets about recording the exact numbers of birds who meet their deaths each night:

With this strong instinct for public spiritedness Colonel Tassin undertook a government system of records, which he ensured were kept with military regularity and, shortly afterward, he was able to deliver detailed reports on each death, including the species of the bird, date, hour of striking, number striking, number killed, direction and force of the wind, character of the weather and general remarks. (259)

Julius's narrative, which simply repeats Tassin's observations, risks being a similarly dispassionate, biopolitical recording device, except, like the tape looping experiments of the 1960s, his splicing renders audible a ghost in the biopolitical machine, a twitch. While Tassin puts the bird deaths down

to weather conditions, the novel concludes with the following, characteristically non-attributable, observation: 'the sense persisted that something more troubling was at work. On the morning of October 13, for example, 175 wrens had been gathered in, all dead of impact, although the night just past hadn't been particularly windy or dark' (259).

Gikandi, we recall, argued that 'the discourse of cosmopolitanism remains incomplete unless we read the redemptive narrative of being global in counterpoint with the narrative of statelessness.' (26). Cole does not directly offer us the narrative of statelessness as such, but in this final image he offers us a memory trace of that narrative, of the violent collision of the refugee with the very system of liberties, freedoms and rights that was supposed to ensure her safe passage. And in so doing, I would suggest, Cole shows how the project of 'aesthetic cosmopolitanism' might be redirected towards its own outside: not in the liberal gesture of inclusion, whereby consciousness extends itself to imaginatively include and thus mourn the lives of others, but rather through the performance of a critical melancholia, whereby the novel gestures towards those lives, and deaths, that remain outside the ken of cosmopolitan sympathy.

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