Introduction Part I:
Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism

Bruce Robbins

Something has happened to cosmopolitanism. It has a new cast of characters. In the past the term has been applied, often venomously, “to Christians, aristocrats, merchants, Jews, homosexuals, and intellectuals.” Now it is attributed, more charitably, to North Atlantic merchant sailors, Caribbean au pairs in the United States, Egyptian guest workers in Iraq, Japanese women who take gaijin lovers. James Clifford proposes that the “status of travelers” should at long last be accorded to the “host of servants, helpers, companions, guides, bearers, etc.” who made Victorian travel possible, and who had their own “specific cosmopolitan viewpoints.”

This change in personnel implies a change in definition. Understood as a fundamental devotion to the interests of humanity as a whole, cosmopolitanism has often seemed to claim universality by virtue of its independence, its detachment from the bonds, commitments, and affiliations that constrain ordinary nation-bound lives. It has seemed to be a luxuriously free-floating view from above. But many voices now insist, with Paul Rabinow, that the term should be extended to transnational experiences that are particular rather than universal and that are unprivileged—indeed, often coerced. Cosmopolitanism should be defined, Rabinow writes, as “an ethos of macro-interdependencies, with an acute consciousness (often forced upon people) of the inescapabilities and particularities of places, characters, historical trajectories, and fates.” Following this lead, Arjun Appadurai calls for anthropology to “study the cosmopolitan (Rabinow 1986) cultural forms of the contemporary world without logically or chronologically presupposing either the authority of the Western experience or the models derived from that experience.”

Renita Parry agrees that “the ‘global flows’ of transnational cultural traffic” have produced “an emergent postcolonial cosmopolitanism.”

Arnold Krupat places the culture of Native Americans within “the project of a cosmopolitan literature,” which is “the projection of heterodoxy not to the level of the universal, but, rather, to the level of the ‘inter-national.”

David Hollinger and Mitchell Cohen both describe their preferred form of cosmopolitanism as “rooted”; Homi Bhabha qualifies his as “vernacular.” The list could include the specifically Asian cosmopolitanisms discussed in this volume by Aihwa Ong and Louisa Schein as well as the specifically African cosmopolitanisms discussed by Kwame Anthony Appiah and Scott Malcomson.
Usages like these mark a change the consequences of which seem both significant enough and ambiguous enough to warrant further inquiry. The “very old ideal of the cosmopolitan,” in Martha Nussbaum’s words, referred to “the person whose allegiance is to the worldwide community of human beings.” According to this ideal, there could be only one cosmopolitanism, for there is only one “worldwide community of human beings.” Kant’s dream of a cosmopolitan point of view leading to perpetual peace could thus be invoked only as a defiant reassertion of Greek or Enlightenment values, of (European) philosophical universalism. In this sense the term seemed to offer a clear-cut contrast to nationalism.

Now, to judge from the new usages, that commonsensical opposition is no longer self-evident. Like nations, cosmopolitanisms are now plural and particular. Like nations, they are both European and non-European, and they are weak and underdeveloped as well as strong and privileged. And again like the nation, cosmopolitanism is there—not merely an abstract ideal, like loving one’s neighbor as oneself, but habits of thought and feeling that have already shaped and been shaped by particular collectivities, that are socially and geographically situated, hence both limited and empowered. Difficult as it may be to make a plural for “cosmos,” it is now assumed more and more that worlds, like nations, come in different sizes and styles. Like nations, worlds too are “imagined.” For better or worse, there is a growing consensus that cosmopolitanism sometimes works together with nationalism rather than in opposition to it. It is thus less clear what cosmopolitanism is opposed to, or what its value is supposed to be.

Situating cosmopolitanism means taking a risk. Until now, only the enemies of cosmopolitanism have been eager to situate it. Cosmopolitanism’s advocates, on the other hand, have most often felt obliged to keep it unlocated in order to preserve its sharp critical edge, as well as its privileges. Given what the clash of embodied interests has made of the world, there is always some seductiveness in calls for transnational altruism, however disembodied and unworldly they may sound. Recently, moreover, philosophical arguments in favor of universalism have returned with a vengeance, bringing with them renewed advocacy of cosmopolitanism in the older sense. But most of the voices gathered here take as their risky and perplexing occasion what contributor Scott Malcomson calls “actually existing” cosmopolitanism. They take off from a double assumption: first, that any cosmopolitanism’s normative or idealizing power must acknowledge the actual historical and geographic contexts from which it emerges, and, second, that such an acknowledgment need not prove fatal. Or, to put it less enthusiastically, the authors of these essays concede that cosmopolitanism is located and embryoned, and they go on to measure such critical, normative power as may remain to it. Exploring a range of diverse cosmopolitanisms, they participate in and comment on the term’s scaling down, its pluralizing and particularizing. As Amanda Anderson notes, the result of this subphilosophical turn is both more modest and more worldly.

Another way to put the contrast is to say that instead of an ideal of detachment, actually existing cosmopolitanism is a reality of (re)attachment, multiple attachment, or attachment at a distance. In a discussion of Buddhist monks and merchants, the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan distinguishes in this way between cosmopolitans, “basically indifferent to where they lived,” and cosmopolites, “habitants of a vast universe.” It is the latter, a sense of positive if complex and multiple belonging, that Tuan endorses. But perhaps there is nothing so simple as a choice here. Habituation that is complex and multiple is already shot through with unavoidable distances and indifferences, with comparison and critique; yet it does not thereby cease to be a mode of belonging.

To embrace this style of residence on earth (Pablo Neruda’s phrase) means repudiating the romantic localism of a certain portion of the left, which feels it must counter capitalist globalization with a strongly rooted and exclusive sort of belonging. In a feature in The Nation devoted to “the dark side of globalization,” we read, for example, “The myth of globalization is that we no longer need to be connected to a place on the earth.” The devastation covered over by complacent talk of globalization is of course very real. But precisely because it is real, we cannot be content to set against it only the childish reassurance of belonging to “a” place. The indefinite article is insufficient. Yes, we are connected to the earth—but not to “a” place on it, simple and self-evident as the surroundings we see when we open our eyes. We are connected to all sorts of places, causally if not always consciously, including many that we have never traveled to, that we have perhaps only seen on television—including the place where the television itself was manufactured. It is frightening to think how little progress has been made in turning invisibly determining and often exploitative connections into conscious and self-critical ones, how far we remain from mastering the sorts of allegiance, ethics, and action that might go with our complex and multiple belonging. But this is work that has to be done. We should not and perhaps cannot accept the old cosmopolitan ideal of transcending the distinction between strangers and friends. Still, we all depend on what Blanche DuBois calls the kindness of strangers. Less than kin or friendship but a good deal more than polite or innocent nonrelation, designating a field rather than
an identity, this phrase is one way of describing the test and invitation offered by cosmopolitics.14

The most general form of the case against cosmopolitanism on the left is the assumption that to pass outside the borders of one’s nation, whether by physical travel or merely by thoughts and feelings entertained while one stays at home, is to wallow in a privileged and irresponsible detachment. What is assumed is in fact a chain of successive detachments: from true feeling, hence from the responsibility that engages a whole person, not a sometime spectator; from responsibility, hence from the constituency to which one would be responsible; from constituency, hence from significant political action.15 The cosmopolitan is held to be incapable of participating in the making of history, doomed to the mere aesthetic spectatorship that he or she is also held secretly to prefer. For a tradition that would include Gramsci and Fanon, though in each case with interesting complications, cosmopolitan identification with the human race serves as the thin, abstract, undesirable antithesis to a red-blooded, politically engaged nationalism.16 The common premise is, as Gopal Balakrishnan remarks of Benedict Anderson, “that the springs of political action are ultimately rooted in the pathos of national membership.”17 Indeed, Anderson shows how the very concept of politics develops in relation to the nation-state. Can a primary concern with interests not defined by or restricted to the nation-state even count as political?

It is perhaps a coincidence that Anderson and Richard Rorty, both eloquent defenders of nationalism, have each represented the absence of genuine feeling or acting on a transnational scale as the absence of anything outside the nation that is worth dying for. The nation takes the place of religion, becoming “the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time,” Anderson says, because people are willing to die for it. But would anyone make the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of a supranational institution? “Who,” he asks pointedly, “will willingly die for Comecon or the EEC?”18 In a similar vein, Rorty argues that under the Nazis, those who risked their lives to save Jews did so less because they considered the Jews fellow human beings than because, together with the particular Jews involved, they belonged to some smaller social grouping, the same city or neighborhood or profession. The terms of rescue are always more parochial than “human being”; they work only within the bounds of “ethnocentrism.” Common humanity is too weak a force to generate sufficient solidarity.19

It is not helpful simply to assert the contrary, as cosmopolitans of the older school do. Martha Nussbaum argues in For Love of Country, for example, that there is indeed powerful feeling at the philosophical level of humanity. For Norman Geras, those who rescued Jews from the Nazis, thereby putting their own lives in grave danger, did so precisely because they saw the Jews as fellow human beings. Maria Langthaler hid two Jewish escapees from nearby Mauthausen in February 1945 because, she said, “The Lord God is for the whole world, not only for the Germans.”20 The problem is the disparity between the few who did and the many who did not. Why were there so few? When does the exception become a statistically significant rule? How do we get from few to many?

The abstract category of the human seems less pertinent to these questions than the messy, compromised particularity of Langthaler’s specifically Christian cosmopolitanism or, to mention Europe’s more recent genocide, the pan-Islamic cosmopolitanism that came to the aid of the Bosnians when the Christian or secular West turned its back and went about its business. Again, in recent California disputes about Proposition 187, which denies rights to undocumented immigrants, Linda S. Bosniak notes “the near-complete omission from the public debate of one particular opposing argument which might have seemed, in theory, an obvious one to make: this is the argument that Prop. 187 should be rejected on the grounds that its treatment of undocumented aliens is unjust” to the aliens themselves. The one major exception, Bosniak declares, was church-based organizations.21 Adding to the usual racism argument (that “United States citizens or lawful permanent residents of color would be either maliciously or mistakenly ensnared by the initiative’s provisions”),22 aimed at “not the undocumented immigrants themselves but a class of nationals” who would be collateraly harmed, they and they alone refused to accept “the national community as the predominant community of normative concern.”23 Anyone familiar with solidarity movements on behalf of Latin American victims of U.S. Cold War policy will recognize the specific church-based cosmopolitanism at work here.

Geras argues more convincingly against the assumption that solidarity must somehow stop short at one’s national borders:

You either can identify, despite the size of this “community,” with fellow Americans plus whoever, in which case you can identify with humanity also. Or else, for reasons of size, you cannot identify with humanity, and then nor can you with Americans plus whoever. It is just not credible that the significant threshold in this matter, where compassion and solicitude will go no further, lies somewhere beyond several hundred million people.24

This is both right and wrong. It is right in that if you can say yes to the nation, you can also say yes to units larger than the nation. If the problem is
merely size, and not a difference in kind, then why not? If cosmopolitanism were really too big, then the nation would be too big as well.

But Geras is wrong, I think, in that the larger unit need not be “humanity” in the abstract. The willingness to consider the well-being of people who do not belong to the same nation as you is not, in other words, something that is mysteriously prefigured by the simple fact of belonging to the human species. Larger loyalties can either be there or not be there. They have to be built up laboriously out of the imperfect historical materials—churches and mosques, commercial interests and immigrant diasporas, sentimentality about hungry children and technorapture over digitalized communication—that are already at hand. They do not stand outside history like an ultimate court of appeal. As Rorty argues in his contribution to this volume, “We cannot resolve conflicting loyalties by turning away from them all toward something categorically distinct from loyalty: the universal moral obligation to act justly.”

There is only a scale of loyalties, and a more or less well-founded hope that “what makes you loyal to a smaller group may give you reason to cooperate in constructing a larger group, a group to which you may in time become equally loyal, or perhaps even more loyal.”

In short, Rorty’s view of solidarity is not finally ethnocentric, though that is what he calls it. It is compatible with cosmopolitanism in the particular or actually existing sense. The same is true of Benedict Anderson’s view of nationalism. For Anderson, too, there seems to be no legitimate feeling outside the nation. But this does not in fact follow from his premises. Feelings are produced within a bounded administrative unit on a national scale, but in Anderson’s argument it is not the bounds themselves that do the producing. And the technologies and institutions that do produce national feeling now exist massively and increasingly on a transnational scale. Anderson’s linking of nationalism to “print-capitalism” in general and to the newspaper in particular invites comparison with the description of the press that ends Ferdinand Tönnies’s famous Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft (1887). Tönnies describes the press as the “real instrument” of “public opinion,” possessing a “universal power” that is comparable and, in some respects, superior to the material power that the states possess through their armies, their treasuries, and their bureaucratic civil service. Unlike those, the press is not confined within natural borders, but, in its tendencies and potentialities, it is definitely international, thus comparable to the power of a temporary or permanent alliance of states. It can, therefore, be conceived as its ultimate aim to abolish the multiplicity of states and substitute for it a single world republic, coextensive with the world market, and which would be ruled by thinkers, scholars, and writers who could dispense with means of coercion other than those of a psychological nature.

If Anderson sees the press as quintessentially nationalist, Tönnies sees it as quintessentially—if also nightmarishly—cosmopolitan. The same excess of human relations beyond “face-to-face contact” is described by one as the very essence of the nation, by the other as the threat of its attenuation and collapse. One writer’s warm, emotional nationalism is the other’s chilly, individualistic cosmopolitanism. But as their common attention to the press suggests, the chill that Tönnies feels outside the nation could as well be recognized within it, and the warmth that Anderson feels inside the nation can just as well be extended beyond it. Anderson “splits off the nationalizing effect of the print technology,” Richard Maxwell observes, “from the capitalist structure in which it arose and to which it has been tied ever since.” As a result, “we are left to fend for ourselves if we want to understand more about the tension inherent in a technology that at once invites communicative action to be national while its owners are searching for ways to make it international.” If people can get as emotional as Anderson says they do about relations with fellow nationals they never see face-to-face, then now that print-capitalism has become electronic- and digital-capitalism, and now that this system is so clearly transnational, it would be strange if people did not get emotional in much the same way, if not necessarily to the same degree, about others who are not fellow nationals; people bound to them by some transnational sort of fellowship. One need go no farther in search of evidence, as Balakrishn answers the question, than Anderson’s own example, religion—certainly considered worth dying for by many, yet also at least as cosmopolitan as it is national.

This is why, according to Arjun Appadurai, “it may be time to rethink monopatriotism, patriotism directed exclusively to the hyphen between nation and state, and to allow the material problems we face—the deficit, the environment, abortion, race, drugs, and jobs—to define those social groups and ideas for which we would be willing to live, and die. . . . Some of us may still want to live—and die—for the United States. But many of these new sovereignties are inherently postnational.”

Anderson’s “print-capitalism” helps explain the less-than-ideal, not entirely enlightened historical process by which loyalties are in effect stretched both within the nation and beyond it, thus eliciting emotional solidarities outside the nation that are continuous with the emotions elicited in the process of nation building. It also helps explain why, though cosmopi-
anism is clearly an outgrowth or ideological reflection of global capitalism, it remains possible to speak (in Rabinow’s phrase) of “critical cosmopolitanism.” Anticosmopolitans frequently assume that capitalism is simply a destroyer of collectivities, yet nothing could be more counterintuitive. After all, why shouldn’t the profit motive lead corporations to distinguish and nourish collective identities that they can then target and sell to, even identities that the buyers may go on to feel worthy of the ultimate sacrifice? This is one of the implications of Anderson’s account of nationalism. “Instead of capitalism, the great profarer of all that is sacred,” Balakrishnan comments, Anderson’s argument turns the compound “print-capitalism” into “the matrix and crucible of its secular reconstitution.” Just as it produced the nation (and the proletariat), so capitalism nurtures what Balakrishnan calls “vernacular sociabilites” that, like nationalism itself, have the potential to inflict, constrain, or even oppose it. Capital may be cosmopolitan, but that does not make cosmopolitanism into an apology for capitalism.

Instead of assuming that capitalism’s in satiable drive to occupy every corner of the globe has led to the imminent collapse of the nation-state, we should consider how tied to particular places capitalism remains and how strong (if unequal) an interest it has in propelling up the nation-state. According to Michael Mann, the theory of “breathless transnationalism” simply does not square with the facts: “It is doubtful whether, in many respects, capitalism is more transnational than it was before 1914, except for the special case of the increasing integration of the European Union. This is hardly an economic base on which to ground any grand generalizing theories of the end of the nation-state.” Under many circumstances capitalism needs the stabilizing powers of the nation-state and will work to build the state up, not tear it down.

This means that there is no simple relation between cosmopolitanism and the state. For one thing, the two are historically intertwined. For better or worse, as Louis Schein shows in her contribution to this volume, the state has “a dialectical relation to the production of the transnational”; it is “crystallized in part through its engagement with that which breaches its border control, its putative sovereignty.” Thus cosmopolitanism is by no means necessarily postnational politics. It is true that what we have learned to recognize as politics remains formed by experience at the scale of the nation-state, as Benedict Anderson and Jonathan Rée argue in their chapters. And it is true that, as Etienne Balibar observes, “borders have stopped marking the limits where politics ends because the community ends.” Thus there must be a stretching of political theory if we are to re-form “public opinion” and habits of citizenship to work on a larger-than-national scale. Politics must be forced to include the variable power of sympathetic imagination to define collectivities of belonging and responsibility in the absence of that long history of face-to-face interaction that Dewey thought was necessary to community. But if the nation-state is not the one political unit capable of doing something to control the world market, nor (therefore) the inevitable focus of our best political energies, neither is it cosmopolitanism’s proper and inevitable antagonist. Struggles for social justice that simply begin at home, within a given nation-state, do not demand to be described as nationalist or to be dismissed as parochial. Even if decoupling from global capitalism were a feasible option, which it does not appear to be, it could certainly be imagined in nonnationalist terms. Samir Amin himself has written movingly in favor of the cosmopolitan ideal.

Indeed, as Alejandro Colás argues, “cosmopolitanism will have to shed some of its inherent distrust of state-centric approaches to political action, and adopt a more realist attitude toward both the force of the state and the international system, and its capacity to fulfill many of the political and social rights defended by cosmopolitans.” It also follows that cosmopolitanism cannot simply gape in admiration before the brave new world of international civil society. It is not just that this world remains dominated by sinister supranational units like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Even the most humanitarian of the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) require strict supervision, and they are less likely to receive it because the transnational domain they inhabit is not fitted with the usual well-kept domestic alarms. “Coinciding with a new eagerness to enforce the writ of the Security Council with troops, the early Nineties marked the clearest opportunity,” Alex de Waal notes, for what he calls “the humanitarian international” of NGOs, which has managed to induce military intervention in situations where the political and economic consequences are extremely unpredictable. “If war is too important to be left to the generals,” he concludes, “humanitarianism is too important to be left to the relief agencies.” The neologism cosmopolitics is also intended to underline the need to introduce intellectual order and accountability into this newly dynamic space of gushingly unrestrained sentiments, pieties, and urgencies for which no adequately discriminating lexicon has had time to develop.

Politics has always been a matter of timing. A long or evolutionary perspective, which in the past often claimed cosmopolitanism as its ultimate goal, can also serve on the contrary to delay its arrival on the agenda. In the debates over Prop. 187, for example, progressives could find little or no room for the interests of the undocumented aliens themselves, for “the fact that the normative world which preoccupies progressives is a national world
is apparently so obvious, so much a given, as to require no specific assertion at all.37 To accept what Bosniak calls “normative nationalism” is to tell noncitzens precisely what was said to women at earlier moments of dramatic political movement: “Your cause may well be just, but it is unfortunately premature. Wait a bit longer. Let us go first.” If history does not teach that this was ever good advice, history also provides concrete reasons for thinking that this collection is well-timed. The opportunities for turning distant economic interdependence into conscious political cooperation have never been so promising. The time for cosmopolitics is now.

This is so in part because of transnational conflicts of loyalty that have already arisen, because discrepant cosmopolitans are colliding with each other much as different cultures and nations are, though perhaps not in quite the same ways.38 Recent metropolitan attention to Third World sweatshops offers an illustration. It is capitalism itself that, by turning the “TV personality” Kathie Lee Gifford into a newsworthy commodity, made possible the dramatic exposure of conditions in the Honduran maquiladoras where Gifford’s Wal-Mart clothing line is produced.39 But now that the Honduran apparel workers have emerged from their convenient invisibility, it is unclear how they should be factored into calculations of global well-being. U.S. unions have been hurt by the flight of capital to places like Honduras. Their cosmopolitan interest in enforcing universal human rights standards around the world is not always easy to distinguish from a competitive interest in making the maquiladoras less profitable, even at the cost of Honduran jobs. How can union and consumer outrage against U.S. retailers be mobilized so as to protect those jobs? Meanwhile, some Honduran unions, while fighting to improve the lot of their workers, also defend a level of child labor that by U.S. standards would constitute abuse. Like the U.S. unions, they argue by comparison; they are both national and (increasingly, necessarily) cosmopolitan. Perhaps there is a single fragile collectivity that might provisionally embrace them both. But in a world of such desperate inequality, even cosmopolitans must learn to negotiate.

Conflicts like this have become familiar to the feminist and ecology movements, among others. Internationalism may well be, in Peter Waterman’s phrase, “an unimagined and unimaginable community. . . . Yet if the old internationalism is dead, the internationalisms of the new social movements (women, ecology, peace, human rights) are alive and kicking.”40 They are also kicking each other, of course. Linking the global and the grassroots is on everyone’s agenda, but there are no guarantees that one link will not block or sever another. Still, some such efforts have been extremely impressive, as for example when Randall Robinson’s TransAfrica Forum, which spearheaded the boycott of South Africa under apartheid, organized public support for sanctions against the government of Nigeria.41 Since women’s rights were defined as human rights in the NGO-dominated Vienna conference of 1995, it has been possible for transnational activists to hold states accountable without pretending that the state itself is the sole or prime source of human rights abuses.42 Referring to human rights has become a way of addressing matters once held to be “private.” Hopefully, activists will now turn their attention to such “private” economic matters as the workers’ right to organize—rights that unsurprisingly are not made much of by governments clamoring loudly about the right to development.

In the meantime, there is cause to worry, as Benedict Anderson does, about the consequences of proliferating ethnic identities, offered on the cheap, that have been cut loose from the structured accountability and the sacrifices that accompany old-fashioned citizenship. For Anderson, “the impending crisis of the hyphen that for two hundred years yoked nation and state” means that “portable nationality, read under the sign of ‘identity,’ is on the rapid rise as people everywhere are on the move.”43 One example of the result would be the highly orchestrated mob violence at the Ayodhya mosque, an operation paid for in large part by Hindus living in the United States and Canada. Anderson describes this as “long-distance nationalism”: “a rapidly spreading phenomenon whereby well-off immigrants to the rich, advanced countries (and their children) are becoming key sources of money, guns, and extremist propaganda in their distant, putative countries of origin—in perfect safety and without any form of accountability.”44

Anyone tempted to use the word cosmopolitan as a simple honorific must deal with the fact that these long-distance nationalisms could just as easily be called cosmopolitans. (Appadurai, who calls them “trojan nationalisms,” notes that they “actually contain transnational, subnational links and, more generally, nonnational identities and aspirations.”)45 To what extent do they deserve such honor as might still cling to the term cosmopolitan? Clearly, there is no inherent virtue in transnationality. Is there then, as Anderson suggests, inherent vice: the dangerous license to meddle that comes of feeling passionately engaged in a given state’s affairs without accepting the duties of a citizen or being physically present on its territory? Is it distance itself that produces effects like Ayodhya, or does the distance of the supporters merely exaggerate our own sense of powerlessness before ethnic and religious violence that is more often produced entirely within the state, violence that citizenship itself is equally incapable of handling? Is it premature to detect, in “human rights culture” and the vocabulary slowly growing up around transnational NGOs, emergent forms of accountability-
at a distance that, without mimicking the established domestic forms of citizenship, nevertheless tend to soften rather than intensify the furies of ethnic nationalism.

Khachig Tololyan asks much the same questions about the related term diaspora. That concept has been seductive because it could be played off against the nation-state. But Tololyan warns against an "inadvertent discursive complicity between diasporists and the transnational project of disabling the nation and its state": "For all too many theorists of diaspora... the project of re-articulating the nation-state seems also to require the option of dis-articulating it." Lobbying the state and dependent on it, genuine diasporas, Tololyan argues, are not merely ethnic identities; they are quasi-political units that "act in consistently organized ways to develop an agenda for self-representation in the political or cultural realm, either in the hostland or across national boundaries." Like citizenship, diaspora has to entail a cost, a sacrifice. And like citizenship, it therefore has to include some very unsavory examples: Cuban Americans dedicated to the downfall of Castro, Jewish Americans supporting an extension of armed Jewish settlements on the West Bank. Crucial to the concept's success, Tololyan writes, was "the emergence of the Israeli state as a figure of diasporan achievement." 48

Like diaspora, cosmopolitanism offers something other than a gallery of virtuous, eligible identities. It points instead to a domain of contested politics—hence our title. Thinking of cosmopolitics not as universal reason in disguise, but as one on a series of scales, as an area both within and beyond the nation (and yet falling short of "humanity") that is inhabited by a variety of cosmopolitanisms, we will not perhaps be tempted to offer the final word on the dilemmas above. But it is something merely to expose them in their full multivoiced complexity, thereby making it clear at least what justice on a global scale would have to resolve. It is something to bring to light the thousand gross and subtle ways in which we are told every day that people outside our borders are too distant to matter. And it is something else to explore the equally varied ways in which they already do or can perhaps be made to matter.

There are of course local reasons for the existence of a book on cosmopolitanism here and now. One reason is the state of the debate over U.S. multiculturalism, which has been mired (and, to a lesser extent, has mired itself) as merely particularistic, a celebration of difference for its own sake. Our elaboration of the term cosmopolitics represents one effort to describe, from within multiculturalism, a name for the genuine striving toward common norms and mutual transatability that is also part of multiculturalism.

Another, equally peremptory, reason is the resurgence of nationalism since the end of the Cold War, including the new and dangerously reinvigorated American nationalism. Theorists of nationalism seem drawn to such manifest absurdities as Elie Kedourie's remark that "nationalism is unknown" in the United States.50 What we have here is a nationalism that does not know itself as such—a nationalism that sees itself as civic rather than ethnic, hence not really national at all, or else as aligned righteously against the corporate globalism of Wall Street, as if Wall Street and its globalism were not as American as subsidies to agribusiness. Scholarly opinion in the United States is sometimes characterized as predominantly and comfortably globalist, anti-nationalist, cosmopolitan. This characterization misses the large extent to which multinational and transnational corporations remain rooted in their nations of origin. It misses the extent to which, for that reason, American policy remains a version of realpolitik, dedicated to a defense of the national interest—a national interest that gives much to the rich and little to the poor, of course, but that still favors the national poor over the nonnational poor and has some real success in exporting social problems beyond our national borders. Thus it also misses the way the national imagination even of progressives remains in thrall to those borders, routinely unwilling or unable to register the moral and political weight of noncitizens.51

In "For a New Nationalism," John Judis and Michael Lind issue a "challenge to the globalization of the American establishment."52 In practice, this takes the form of Lind's crusade for drastic cuts in immigration. And it entails a certain provocation for those of us who—like all of the contributors to this book—are professionally concerned with culture, for it highlights the special culpability of culture in naturalizing the national interest.

Blaming immigration for U.S. poverty, Lind notes, as if in an afterthought, that "immigration restriction should... be accompanied by checks upon the expatriation of American industry."53 But why not just start with the "checks," with stopping capital flight? Surely that would address the economic problem more directly. It appears that Lind, like Patrick Buchanan, needs culture—here, a cultural distaste for immigrants—to cover his equivocation over the amorality of capitalism and the U.S. national interest.54 His "new nationalism" systematically confuses an affirmation of U.S. cultural identity, which is innocuous enough, with an affirmation of U.S. economic advantage and military strength, both of which entail shameless superiority over unnamed others. A natural appreciation for the "language
and culture” that define the American nation slowly becomes an “economic nationalism,” an imperative to defend “the relative status of [one’s] nation in the world economy.”

Given the current distribution of the world’s resources and the way the relative prosperity of the United States depends on its active impoverishment of so many citizens of so many other countries, for a U.S. citizen to make such an argument is nothing less than obscene. Pride is certainly one mark of attachment to one’s country—but so is shame. It is as an American that I feel shamed by sentiments like these—shame at belonging to a culture and writing in a public sphere that accept them as normal. This book was assembled largely in the hope of making such sentiments seem more exceptional and more exceptional.

Notes


9. On Asian cosmopolitanism, the reader may wish to consult the forthcoming work of Nozaki Sakai, whose superb analysis of Japanese imperial cosmopolitanism in the 1930s is unfortunately too long to be included in the present collection.


11. The reference is to Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991 [1983]). As an example of the world conceived as one term on a sliding scale, rather than as an ultimate philosophical horizon, take Joseph Levenson’s account of two stages of Chinese cosmopolitanism: “When Confucianism was vital . . . it was cosmopolitan; it did not simply correspond to 'day-to-day life in rural China.' But when China ceased to be a world and became a nation, or struggled to become one, Confucianism was provincial in that larger world that contained the Chinese nation. The intellectuals left it then, for a new cosmopolitanism.” Joseph R. Levenson, Revolution and Cosmopolitanism: The Western Stages (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 5.


14. For the relevance of Tennessee Williams’s famous formula, see Bonnie Honig, ‘No Place Like Home’: Democracy and Foreignness (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, forthcoming) chap. 1. For an argument that, unlike Honig’s, uses the impossibility of overcoming the friend/stranger distinction to argue against cosmopolitanism as such, see Michael J. Sandel, Democracy’s Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 342–43. Sandel makes his argument clearer by assuming that cosmopolitans hold that “the mere universal communities we inhabit must always take precedence over more particular ones” (343; emphasis added).


For Fanon, the “profusely cosmopolitan mold” imprinted on the mind of the national middle class in Europe’s colonies belongs with “intellectual laziness” and “spiritual paralysis” as a sign that it has not fulfilled its national vocation: “to make the totality of the nation a reality to each citizen.” Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1963), 149, 209. Alejandro Caffi suggests that along with their “optimistic belief in evolution,” Marx and Engels “grasped the historical import of supporting certain nationalist movements (Irish, Polish, Italian) insofar as they represented the toppling of the ancient régime.” These two factors explain “why socialists have preferred to talk of internationalism as opposed to the more blatantly anti-nationalism: cosmopolitanism.”
22. Ibid., 569.
23. Ibid., 559.
25. Gerb writes: “Starting, for instance, from fellow Americans, you might begin to extend your sense of ‘we’ to Mexican, Brazilians, Chileans and so forth, and thence to the peoples of Europe. Or starting from fellow Catholics, you might move on to every kind of Christian, then to Jews and Muslims. But this process either stops short somewhere within humankind, or on account of the needed contrast-effects, or it does not. If it does, then some people, the people of Africa perhaps, or Hindus and atheists, get to be excluded from moral concern and they can go hungry or be massacred for all you care.” (Ibid., 77)
26. Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Society (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft)*, trans. and ed. Charles P. Loomis (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1957 [1887]), 221. The passage continues: “Such tendencies and intentions will perhaps never find a clear expression, let alone realization, but their recognition serves to assit in the . . . realization of the fact that the existence of natural states is but a temporary limitation of the boundaryless Gesellschaft. In this context it must be pointed out that the most modern and Gesellschaft-like state, the United States of America, can or will least of all claim a truly national character.”
28. Balakrishnan, “The National Imagination,” 63. Balakrishnan notes that the religion/kinship analogy on which Anderson’s view of nationalism depends (What are you willing to die for?), hence also the life-and-death line separating nationalism from cosmopolitanism, assumes an implicit state of war (67). It is only under threat of war that people are willing to die for their nation. Thus what undermines nationalism most is peace.
32. Michael Mana, “As the Twentieth Century Ages,” *New Left Review* 214 (November/December 1995): 117–18. Transnationalism is much more pronounced in finance than in trade and industry, Mana argues. “The rational bases of production and trade seem diminished. Ninety per cent of global production remains for the domestic market . . . Furthermore, almost all the so-called ‘multinational corporations’ are still owned overwhelmingly by nationals in their home-base country, and their headquarters and research and development activities are still concentrated there” (117). True, financial transnationalism cuts down the ability of nation-state to control interest rates and currency valuation (118), but this was in any case a rather unused power. Mana argues that the social welfare state is in retreat for other reasons, especially economic stagnation and its impact on state finances. Similar doubts are expressed by Simon Bromley in *Globalization?: Radical Philosophy* 80 (November/December 1996): 2–5.
33. Fredric Jameson recently remarked on “the impossibility for any national or regional area to achieve its own autonomy and subsistence or to delink or unescoupe itself from the world market.” Fredric Jameson, “Five Theses on Actually Existing Marxism,” *Monthly Review* 47, no. 11 (1996): 10. If nationalism is primarily or properly defensive, a response to external threat, then what do we make of a situation in which everyone in the world, including the Afrikanders and the Bosnian Serbs, can claim to feel threatened from outside, and to some extent is threatened?
38. In the past, cosmopolitanism was associated with a prophetic, totalitarian teleology. Liberal cosmopolitans of the nineteenth century could support nationalism as well as free trade because they saw the nation as a necessary step on the evolutionary path toward ultimate world peace and understanding. Bigger was better, in politics as in economics. It remains tempting to think of the movement from smaller to larger loyalties as a translation of what was once called rationality. But if larger loyalties seem better matched to the larger dependences that global capitalism has wrought, size cannot claim to signify virtue, synthesis, or resolution on the left any more than on the right.
42. See, for example, Bruce Robbins, “Sad Stories in the International Public Sphere: Richard Rorty on Culture and Human Rights,” *Public Culture* 8, no. 2 (1997): 209–32.
47. Ibid., 15.
48. Ibid., 24.
49. For the geographer Neil Smith, body, home, community, urban space, region, nation, and globe are all specific and distinct scales that are not simply homologous with each other. There is a family resemblance here to the evolutionary politics of scale that Heidegger's Marxism shares with nineteenth-century liberalism: a rising sequence of more and more inclusive stages. For Smith, as for this cosmopolitan tradition, political failure may be defined as a failure to "jump scales"—he gives the example of Stalin's failure to move beyond "socialism in one country." The difference is that if there are moments when it is politically necessary to move from a "lower" to a "higher" scale, Smith insists that the reverse is also true; the race politically urgent task can also require moving from a larger to a smaller scale—from a politics of the nation, say, to a politics of the body, or a politics of the body-on-the-level-of-the-nation. Hierarchy has only a contingent, not an "ontological," status. These different scales are better seen as nested rather than hierarchical, the hierarchical ordering of scales being a certain candidate for abolition in a revolutionized social geography. The benefit of the cosmopolitanism to be derived from Smith on scale, then, is that it measures both the effort or struggle necessary to "jump scales" and the possibly injurious or regressive consequences of so doing—without assuming, in other words, that there is anything "natural" about movement in either direction. Neil Smith, "Contours of a Spatialized Politics: Homeless Vehicles and the Production of Geographical Scale," Social Text 33 (1992): 66.
51. A good example is Benjamin Barber's Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism Are Reshaping the World (New York: Ballantine, 1995), which tries to reclaim American nationalism by claiming for it the vast area between the book's polemically polarized titular terms. Consider Barber's treatment of cosmopolitanism. The first sentence of his first chapter is a quotation from the chairman of Gillette: "I do not find foreign countries foreign." "Welcome to McWorld," Barber announces grandly (23). It is an astounding moment of neoinflationism. If the head of a multinational firm fails to recognize an essential difference between U.S. citizens and the citizens of foreign nations, then what follows? Perhaps that those of us who abhor the results of unrestrained multinational capital should find foreigners foreign?
52. John B. Judis and Michael Lind, "For a New Nationalism," New Republic, March 27, 1995, 19-27. Judis, writing earlier in In These Times, declared: "The left should reclaim from the right the cause of nationalism—nationalism as opposed to sectionalism and individualism. The left should stand for policies and programs that put the national interest before that of private corporations or Washington interest groups. The left should be at the forefront of those urging the economic revitalization of the country, and it should be vigilant about protecting America's interests against those of foreign governments and corporations and the new globalists of Wall Street and Washington." John Judis, "Looking Left and Right: The Evolution of Political Direction," In These Times, June 12-25, 1991, 12-13.