

INTRODUCTION

A familiar narrative about the period following the American and French Revolutions is that the cosmopolitan Enlightenment gave way to a romantic nationalism that was ascendant until World War I. That nationalism and conservative romanticism gained strength after 1789 can hardly be disputed, but the cosmopolitan ideal exerted influence and developed creatively during the same period. After the end of the Cold War in 1988–9, the cosmopolitan political ideas of the Enlightenment, especially Kant's, attracted considerable interest. Other features of the Enlightenment – tolerance, secularism, internationalism and commerce des lumières (exchange of enlightened ideas) – also acquired appeal in light of recent developments like ethnic cleansing, xenophobic hatred and politicized religious fundamentalism. One could do worse than studying Enlightenment cosmopolitanism in search of a useable past for intellectual models of multiculturalism in the global village.

That cosmopolitan signifies both world citizen and worldliness suggests a dialectical relationship between political arrangements and cultural-psychological dispositions. Those in intolerant, fearful cultures are unlikely to support political initiatives for international cooperation and trans-national dialogue, whereas those who travel outside their own communities and learn about experiences different from their own do not find political cosmopolitanism immediately threatening.

This study treats cosmopolitanism in three different spheres: the political, the philosophical and the literary. Although there are versions of political cosmopolitanism other than and even opposed to that of Kant and Habermas, the book concentrates almost exclusively on the ideas for 'perpetual peace' first put forward by the philosopher from Königsberg and developed further by the most important thinker of the Frankfurt School's second generation. Even if one finds Habermas's cosmopolitan ideas flawed in whole or in part, one encounters in his writing a fully worked-out argument that is richly elaborated and rigorously developed. He not only illustrates in great detail the limitations and achievements of the Kantian legacy but opens his revision of Kant to a critical dialogue with other traditions. A more centrally positioned proponent of Enlightenment

ideas would be difficult to find because since the 1960s Habermas has defended the Enlightenment against numerous adversaries. The first chapter explores the political and philosophical cosmopolitanism of Kant and Habermas.

According to Habermas, one of the important preconditions for political cosmopolitanism both then and now is an open, tolerant and intellectually fearless public sphere with trans-national currents. Only a public sphere in the special Habermasian sense of the phrase – private people coming together as a public to subject the prevailing norms to critical examination and discussion – can move society toward a deliberative democracy that achieves legitimacy through uncoerced and open discussion. In the words of Seyla Benhabib, essential 'to the deliberative model of democracy is the idea of a "public sphere" of opinion-formation, debate, deliberation, and contestation among citizens, groups, movements, and organizations in a polity'.¹ The second chapter is devoted to the theory and history of the public sphere, including the extraordinary efforts to expand the public sphere in a more democratic direction in the 1790s. Kant in Prussia and the *Analytical Review* and John Thelwall in Britain both reflected on the public sphere and acted boldly within it. The second chapter also addresses the richly layered discussion on the public sphere that followed Habermas's influential treatment of the subject in the early 1960s.

The *Analytical Review* deserves close study because it professed Enlightenment values the entire span of its existence from 1788 until 1799 when it ceased largely because of political repression. The *Analytical's* Enlightenment was experimental, self-critical and cosmopolitan. Its founder Thomas Christie became a revolutionary activist in Paris after 1789 and its publisher Joseph Johnson took risks choosing principal reviewers like the feminist Mary Wollstonecraft and the liberal Catholic priest Alexander Geddes. Although the journal was anchored in the culture of Protestant Dissent, it was not a sectarian publication; it was rather a 'worldly' periodical, interested in and engaged with what happened everywhere. The *Analytical* is a good example of the public sphere at work. Similarly, Thelwall is a useful example because he tested the limits of the already existing public sphere by popular lecturing and writing that provoked harsh repression. Moreover he was in the unusual position of participating in both the plebeian and the bourgeois public spheres. Although I have written about Thelwall and the public sphere extensively elsewhere, especially in *Seditious Allegories*,² here I give an exposition of how his public-sphere ideas and actions relate to specifically cosmopolitan concepts.

The next three chapters focus on the cosmopolitan aspects of feminism, abolitionism and Jewish emancipation. Women, Africans and Jews were complexly implicated in the process by which the modern world came to define itself. Three separate kinds of binary value systems of gender, race and religion collaborated to construct the superiority of Christian, male Europeans who were entitled to

empire abroad and patriarchal domination at home. The French Revolution's liberal divorce (1792) (but not the franchise and full citizenship for women), Jewish emancipation (1791) and slavery abolition (1794) mark out the areas of contestation between an emergent cosmopolitan politics and an emergent nationalistic politics.

The central figure of the third chapter, 'Women and Justice', has to be Mary Wollstonecraft, because her ideas outpaced those of other feminists like Catharine Macaulay and because she created texts of such richness and complexity that they reward close attention. I structure the chapter around two moments, the courtroom speech of Wollstonecraft's Maria at her lover's 'crim. con' trial and Wollstonecraft's satirical deconstruction of Rousseau's character Sophie from *Émile* (1762). I provide a context for understanding the extraordinary speech in *The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) in terms of how justice for women is constructed in the law and fiction of the romantic era. The critique of Sophie depends on Wollstonecraft's reading the 'paradoxical' Rousseau as conflicted because she deploys one part of his thinking against another part. Wollstonecraft finds especially useful the writing in Rousseau's educational treatise unrelated to the almost cartoonishly sexist depiction of Sophie because *Émile* has some of the strongest arguments against aristocratic injustice. Although the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) has attracted no shortage of strong opinions, there have not been a large number of close readings of this extraordinarily rich text. By paying attention to specific passages and lines of argument I hope to convey the depth and power of Wollstonecraft's writing. Although no other woman writer's life was perhaps as cosmopolitan as hers, the chapter concentrates on the writing and its overall argument for sexual equality that is profoundly cosmopolitan.

The fourth chapter, 'Writing Against Slavery, Race and Empire', focuses on the Enlightenment's invention both of race theory, and of ways to subvert that theory through the articles in the *Analytical Review*, through Equiano's magnificent protest against slavery and racism in his *Interesting Narrative* (1788) and through Thelwall's neglected abolitionist and anti-imperialist texts, his two plays (*Incle and Yarico* (1787) and *The Incas* (1792)) and his feminist novel *The Daughter of Adoption* (1801). The Enlightenment's limitations and errors are prominent in its creation of race science and in the credibility it lent to forms of biological determinism. The triumph of race science was hardly certain in the romantic era because the science itself was so incoherent and strong voices condemned it from the start. As one of the most liberal periodicals, the *Analytical* discloses an interesting range of views on race and empire. While the *Analytical* articles and Thelwall texts have received little attention up to this point, the same cannot be said about Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*, which is a secure part of the new literary canon. I delineate what I consider to be a rhetorical reading of this slave narrative. The principal goal of Equiano's rhetoric is to persuade

the British political culture to abolish the slave trade – and then slavery. At the same time the text produces astonishingly forceful moments of irony that go beyond the immediate rhetorical occasion. Few writers could have the cosmopolitan credentials of Equiano, world traveller and transatlantic citizen, but the text itself develops a cosmopolitan argument against racism and for hybridized national identity – an argument pertinent to multiculturalism. Although never produced on stage (mostly for political rather than aesthetic reasons), Thelwall's two plays present versions of British identity that are militantly cosmopolitan, as the heroes take up arms with native Americans against Europeans. Thelwall's novel, which integrates a strongly feminist concentration with a critique of aristocratic culture, racism and slavery, offers a sympathetic representation of the St. Domingo slave rebellion (1791–1803) – the historical moment that conditions attitudes on race and slavery throughout the romantic era. It undercuts systematically the most popular history of the slave rebellion, the one written by the Jamaican planter Bryan Edwards.

Chapter 5, entitled 'Jewish Questions', starts by examining two influential plays by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing that promoted Jewish toleration and emancipation – *Die Juden* (The Jews) (1749) and *Nathan der Weise* (Nathan the Wise) (1779) – and then positions two Anglo-Jewish voices – David Levi and Emma Lyon – beside a philo-Semitic Anglo-Irish voice – Maria Edgeworth. Levi the pugnacious theological controversialist is interesting less for the particularities of his rebuttals of Christian biblical interpretation than for his role in 'Englishing' Judaism and his unapologetic defences of Judaism to Christians utterly unused to such impertinence. Lyon's poetry is readable as an artful and measured performance of deference towards, and in defiance of, the codes of gender and religion. She too contributes significantly to the project of multicultural, hybridized national identity. Already marked by a mixed national identity, the Anglo-Irish Edgeworth repents her numerous offences against Jews in her fiction by constructing the first anti-anti-Semitic novel that deconstructs some of the key myths supporting anti-Jewish prejudice. Because *Harrington* (1816) has received lively and thorough interpretations recently, I concentrate on a limited but important aspect of the novel, its scepticism about naming, which challenged racial prejudice in a fundamental way. Jews were treated not just as religiously different but as racially different as well.

In the conclusion, 'Postnational Cosmopolitanism?', I present a brief discussion of the Shelley circle's cosmopolitanism centred mostly on readings of two travel narratives by Wollstonecraft and the Shelleys, and commentary on two Mary Shelley texts, *Mathilda* (1820) and *Valperga* (1823). Finally, Habermas's recent essay on the Kantian project and the divided West appropriately returns our attention to the political and philosophical issues with which we began.

Although the book covers intensively both well-known and neglected cosmopolitan writers whose importance my work tries to illustrate, it does not attempt or claim exhaustive treatment of the topic. The study opens up a field of inquiry for others to explore further; I am only too aware of the many interesting lines of research I had to forego because of practical constraints. The particular emphases of Habermas, Kant, the public sphere, women, race, slavery, empire and Jews are neither arbitrary nor wholly constitutive of the cosmopolitan field. One can do only so much. Areas I wish I could have explored include economic theory, war, Orientalism, the theatre, more periodicals and more German, French and American writers. The cosmopolitan aspects of Byron, the Shelleys and their circle I only begin to sketch out in the conclusion. If the book sparks interest and further research in a critical but ignored area of literary and intellectual history, it will have been useful.

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