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COSMOPOLITANISM'S ACTUALLY EXISTING BEYOND; TOWARD A VICTORIAN GEOPOLITICAL AESTHETIC

By Lauren M. E. Goodlad

ALTHOUGH "COSMOPOLITANISM" IS, in many respects, the recognized creation of the eighteenth century, in recent years the idea has made a mark on the theory and practice of Victorian studies.[1] In this essay I offer some reflections on this development while suggesting one future path for a Victorianist cosmopolitan practice. My goal is to limn a theory of what I call "the Victorian geopolitical aesthetic" which, in grasping the globalizing dynamics of the nineteenth century, illuminates the literature and culture of that era. By way of doing so, I will explore cosmopolitan literary study as it has so far developed, describing its focus on ethics. I will also try to update the legacy of historical materialism (including the work of Georg Lukács, Raymond Williams, and Fredric Jameson) by integrating it with newer transnational perspectives such as cosmopolitanism and the new Atlantic studies. My aim is to suggest ways of reading Victorian literature – specifically realist fiction but potentially other genres as well – which recognize the power of literature to engage "actually existing cosmopolitanisms" then and now.

Central to the critical practice I propose is a mode of historicization which, following Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, integrates the "subjective" and "objective" dimensions of history: a mode, in other words, that reads cultural expressions such as literature and ethical discourse as "methodologically inseparable" from overarching geohistorical structures (105). As Dominick LaCapra has recently remarked "there is an important sense" in which "long-term structural processes" – in, this instance, globalization – elude conscious experience (48). Critics such as Jameson have spoken of a "geopolitical unconscious" that renders such eluded experience in aesthetic form (Jameson, *Geopolitical*), but they have yet to test these insights in Victorian contexts. Meanwhile, critics of cosmopolitanism's literary dimensions have not yet elaborated the relation between Victorian ethics and the structural processes of global expansion.

Can a single critical practice achieve both of these ends, combining cosmopolitan critique with a theory of the Victorian geopolitical aesthetic? I believe that it can. In what follows, I articulate a critical wish list for this enterprise which includes (1) the joining of ethics and geopolitics, (2) a historical materialism that integrates subjective expression and geohistorical structure, (3) a corresponding openness to the normative aspirations of both poststructuralism

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and the Enlightenment, and, finally, (4) a renewed attention to literary form. In Part I of this essay I explain how the first three desiderata can shape a Victorianist practice of seeking out "actually existing cosmopolitanisms"; in Part II I elaborate how attention to literary form can build on the latter practice to find the Victorian geopolitical aesthetic at work.

Part I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanisms

THE NOTIONS OF COSMOPOLITANISM circulating among Victorianists are part of the broad multidisciplinary interest in the topic which began in the 1990s, a decade that saw the end of the Cold War as well as increasing attention to globalization. The sociologists Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen have described this cosmopolitan turn as a "new politics of the left" which encompasses visions of global democracy or transnational social movements; the advocacy of a "post-identity politics of overlapping interests and heterogeneous or hybrid publics"; as well as the valorization of "behaviours, values, or dispositions" that manifest "a capacity to engage cultural multiplicity" (1). Notably, it is the last of these cosmopolitan desiderata which has been of greatest interest to Victorianists such as Amanda Anderson who has led the way in fashioning a literary practice focused on a particular nineteenth-century *ethos*. In *The Powers of Distance* (2001), she defines cosmopolitanism to entail "reflective distance from one's original or primary cultural affiliations, a broad understanding of other cultures and customs, and a belief in universal humanity" (63). Anderson thus conceives cosmopolitanism as an embodied aspect of character rather than, say, the evocation of global democracy, or the description of transnational practices, spheres, or contexts. Her focus on ethos is deliberate. While today's cosmopolitan discourses are alert to global politics as well as cultural diversity, she makes clear, nineteenth-century precursors were geopolitically reactionary or naïve (90).

Anderson's readiness to set aside Victorian geopolitics, the more deftly to explore the era's ethical payload, invites a supplementary criticism. Extending cosmopolitanism beyond ethical focal points, this alternative practice would engage structural process as well as ethos, exploring the nineteenth-century's "awareness of geopolitical conditions" alongside its moral discourse (90). Of course, structural conditions are often explored by critics working under the sign of *transnationalism* or *internationalism*.[2] Yet, since the latter terms tend to yield descriptive rather than recuperative analysis – if not criticism reflexively skeptical of the norms it unearths – scholars of cosmopolitanism face an important question. Does the focus on material history invariably beget a suspicious hermeneutics at odds with cosmopolitanism's more affirmative mood? If not, can Victorianist practice combine the new emphasis on cosmopolitan ethics with in-depth description of an imperial age? The aim of such practice would not (or not often) be to valorize Victorian geopolitics but, rather, to recognize the nineteenth century as the precursor to our own globalizing moment: the scene of multifarious world perspectives, democratic projects, heterogeneous publics, and transnational encounters (some recuperable for present-day ethics, a great many more worthy of illuminating historicization).[3] The practice I envision would enunciate the geohistorical as well as expressive dimensions of Victorian globality, exploring the sinuous interchange between embedding structures and embodied ethics.

To put this point another way, the nineteenth century, as well as a fount of ethical critique, was an era of flourishing "actually existing cosmopolitanisms." Bruce Robbins uses this phrase in his introduction to *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation* (1998)

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to contrast the cosmopolitan conceptions of the 1990s to their Enlightenment antecedents. Whereas the abstract cosmopolitanism of Kant's day projected an elitist "view from above," the term now seeks to capture a wide range of "transnational experiences that are particular rather than universal and that are unprivileged – indeed, often coerced" ("Introduction" 1). Such pluralized cosmopolitanisms are deliberately modest: to admit that "cosmopolitanism is located and embedded" is to situate one's object of study and then "measure such critical, normative power as may remain to it" (2–3). In her contribution to the volume, Anderson describes this critical temper as "casual normativity" ("Cosmopolitanism" 196). Straddling poststructuralism's ethical commitment to alterity as well as the Enlightenment's vision of universal justice, the new cosmopolitanisms are resolutely pluralist but eager, nonetheless, for a normative horizon beyond mere endorsement of multiplicity or hybridity.

Of course, with their largely present-day address, the essays in *Cosmopolitics* do not call on readers to embark on historicist projects or probe cosmopolitanism's nineteenth-century forms. The project of "actually existing cosmopolitanism" they define entails revising eighteenth-century ideals by the lights of turn-of-the-millennium materialities. Nonetheless, the Romantic and Victorian eras were periods of noteworthy backlash against Enlightenment abstraction. From a Victorian perspective, the term "cosmopolitanism" was more likely to evoke the impersonal structures of capitalism and imperialism than an ethos of tolerance, world citizenship, or multiculturalism (Goodlad, "Trollopian"). Exploring the nineteenth-century's actually existing cosmopolitanisms thus presents no antiquarian enterprise, but the chance to historicize the transnational experiences of a century in which capitalist and imperial expansion was as dynamic as globalizing processes today.

The Victorianist practice I envision can be productively compared to the new Atlantic studies prominent among many Americanist scholars. Indeed, Atlantic studies bears a kind of family relation to cosmopolitan critique through the influence on both of *The Black Atlantic* (1993), Paul Gilroy's groundbreaking effort to reconceive modernity through its "constitutive relationship" with diasporic Africans (17).[4] Gilroy is a pivotal partner for the new cosmopolitanisms, not least because his work exemplifies a comparable straddle of poststructuralist ethics and the Enlightenment project of modernity. Thus, while Gilroy argues that black Atlantic experience both "found[ed] and temper[s]" a modernity hitherto distorted by the racializing logics of nationalism and Eurocentricism (17), he retains the cosmopolitan idea of modernity as substantively global and universalizable.[5] To be sure, since Gilroy focuses on the Atlantic world, not the world at large, his "transnational and intercultural perspective" is, arguably, provincial and even Eurocentric (15). "Blacks might be internal to the West" but, according to *The Black Atlantic*, Neil Lazurus writes, "modernity is still a Western, and not a global phenomenon" – one in which the experiences particular to "vast regions of the 'non-West' are conspicuously absent" (62–63).[6] This difficulty notwithstanding, Gilroy's book is significant for its readiness to historicize the black Atlantic as, in effect, a mode of actually existing cosmopolitanism. With New World slavery as the transnational structure in which black Atlantic experience is rooted, Gilroy's case for a vital diasporic culture places ethics and geopolitics in the same historical frame. Black Atlantic poiesis expresses a collective cosmopolitan ethos that, borrowing Robbins's terms, derives its "normative or idealizing power" from "actual historical and geographic contexts" – not in spite of them ("Introduction" 2).

Gilroy's historical materialism has, however, been criticized by more recent scholars of the Atlantic. In his account of the "new Atlantic matrix," William Boelhower describes

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an inventive multidisciplinary practice forged through the assemblage of unconventional archives; detachment from postcolonialism's lingering attachments to the nation-state; and, above all perhaps, assertion of the fundamental differences between land and the "Oceanic order" (91; cf. 94). Noting Gilroy's use of terms like *structure* and *system* to describe the Atlantic, Boelhower objects that such vocabulary tends to "eliminate or downgrade standpoint, individual agency, and the possibility of the appearance of the new and the singular" (91). Thus, where Lazarus finds Gilroy's focus on slavery to be too subjectivist – too prone to abstracting the "lived crisis" of remembering slavery from the "systemic crisis" in which such memory is enmeshed (Lazarus 66; cf. Gilroy, *Black* 40) – Boelhower, rejecting structure as "a view from nowhere," regards Gilroy as too deterministic (91).

Elaborating a normative vision that is not so much emancipatory as restitutive, this newer Atlanticism sets out to repay "a debt" to "the submerged and the drowned of the slave trade" (94–95). Where Gilroy portrayed black Atlantic experience as integral to a universal modernity, Boelhower claims exceptional epistemological properties for an oceanic "ecology" that he interprets in light of Atlantic contexts (93). The result is a practice caught between commitment to the matrix as a contingent and particularistic formation and an equally strong investment in the Atlantic's exceptionality. Hence, for all the inventiveness and passion of the new Atlantic studies, Boelhower's vision offers no clear alternative to what Paul Rabinow describes as cosmopolitanism's "ethos of macro-interdependencies" (qtd. in Robbins, "Introduction" 2). Refusing the straddle of poststructuralist ethics and a global modern project, the new Atlantic matrix articulates compelling restitutive aims only to isolate them from any larger normative horizon.[7]

Nonetheless, subjectivist emphases like Boelhower's (the commitment to standpoint, individual agency, and the "new and singular") warrant close attention from Victorianist scholars. Whereas Atlanticists begin with an "absence of documentation," creating novel archives to produce histories "dictated by the conquered" (Boelhower 94–95), Victorianists, almost stifled by the evidentiary mass, wrestle with the footprint of history's self-styled hegemons. As Sharon Marcus notes, Victorian studies, however reconfigured by transnational perspectives, remains resolutely Anglophone. Although recent scholarship addresses "England's traffic with the non-English speaking world," few articles "require knowledge of Scottish dialect, Gaelic, Welsh, Sanskrit, Hindi, Arabic, French, German, Latin, or Greek" (679–80). Marcus thus offers two distinct takes on a transnational Victorian studies. In the more auspicious of the two, historicism enables a "truly comparative" criticism that studies "variations and interactions" among and within national literatures, in lieu of pseudo-universal categories such as "the Novel" (680). Yet, if this promising historicism tallies with cosmopolitanism's interest in actually existing transnational (or transoceanic) formations – suggesting a comparative practice that explores any number of formal, aesthetic, or ethical keynotes in multiple contexts – Marcus's second reflection casts doubt on such enterprise. On this more skeptical view, transnational Victorian studies, no matter how sophisticated its geopolitical grasp, "continues to lack. . .linguistic and hence conceptual range." By limiting knowledge of imperialism to Anglophone archives, Victorian studies "reproduces the very dominance of English culture and imperial power such work set out to question" (681–82).

One understands, of course, the scruples that motivate Marcus's oscillation between affirming a geopolitically-informed historiography and asserting the perils of monolingualism. Likewise, one understands the impulse "to make mute or fragmented things speak" which motivates Boelhower's determination to assign retroactive sovereignty

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to Atlantic subjectivities at precisely the moment when Eurocentric formations are stripped of theirs (94). Nonetheless, it is worth thinking about the self-imposed standards that regulate these different critical projects. Where Boelhower's Atlanticist is empowered by the avowed gaps in her knowledge, Marcus's Victorianist, no matter how alert to the power relations that condition her archive, is pressed to recall the infinite limitations of her Anglophone practice.[8] Clearly, the same ethical commitment to attending otherness enables, in the one case, generous affirmation of submerged standpoints, and, in the other, unflinching vigilance toward discursive formations that retain their power to dominate and exclude. These differences of context notwithstanding, both kinds of project express deeply felt responsibility to otherness. Moreover, both recognize historicism as that aspect of the critical enterprise which strives to illuminate the concrete conditions from which normative aspirations spring and in which they either take root or fail.

My concern, then, is that even as historical materialism is recognized as an indispensable premise for transnational practice, one finds a recurrent tendency to pit cultural expression against structural analysis in ways that militate against exploring the actually existing cosmopolitanisms of the past. Expression is disarticulated from structure by the separation of ethics and geopolitics and – more emphatically – by the assumption that desirable standpoints, agencies and singularities are immobilized by structural analysis. The practice I envision would join historians such as Manu Goswami in conceiving "categories of self-understanding" – including the crucial cosmopolitan category of ethos – as standing in dialectical relation to "the social contexts of their generation and reproduction" (780). If this critical starting point makes it harder to disintricate ethics from geopolitics, it also makes it necessary to theorize standpoint, agency, and singularity in light of structural process.

Goswami derives her materialist premises from Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant who have described the structural and expressive dimensions of modern social phenomena as "two translations of the same sentence" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 105; qtd. in Goswami 771). Her work exemplifies a recent effort among historians to moderate the impacts of poststructuralist methodology. As against a more purely discursive historiography, historians like Goswami draw out the sociohistorical – and, I would add, geopolitical – conditions that enable transformations within and across multi-faceted discourses such as nationalism and liberalism.[9] Such "axiomatic" connection between structure and cultural expression is, of course, hardly new (Goswami 708); it is integral both to the cultural studies approach of Robbins and Gilroy and, as we shall see, the Marxist literary criticism of scholars like Fredric Jameson and Raymond Williams.

What happens when the focus shifts from culture broadly defined to aesthetic forms of expression such as literature? Up until this point I have argued for a cosmopolitan Victorianist practice that attends geopolitics as well as ethos, and structure as well as standpoint. In what follows I specify the added rewards of making the same geopolitical turn a turn, partly, toward literature. Jameson's notion of the *geopolitical aesthetic* – revised in light of nineteenth-century perspectives – provides a framework for reading actually existing ideals and experience through the prism of cosmopolitan structures.

Part II: The Victorian Geopolitical Aesthetic

TO CALL FOR A LITERARY PRACTICE that finds transnational experience embedded in global structures of possibility is, in effect, to say that cosmopolitanism can be studied

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not only as ethos, and not only as structure or process, but also as *form*. Comparative theorists of the novel have prepared the ground for this idea in a variety of ways: for example, Cohen and Dever's description of the novel's "inter-national" provenance or Franco Moretti's notion of "world literature" as a global morphology in which local materialities meet and transfigure novelistic form (*Literary Channel*, "Conjectures"). Both formulations enable critics to capture literature's globality through the interplay of aesthetic expression and geohistorical process – conceiving form as a medium through which transnational processes are encountered, figured and, to some degree, shaped. Moreover, both formulations, while loosely exemplifying a cultural studies approach to understanding the materiality of discourse, also recognize literary form as – in Georg Lukács's words – literature's most "truly social element" (qtd. in Eagleton, *Marxism* 20).

Lukács's insight has been integral to a long critical tradition in which "specifying the features which uniquely distinguish works of literature from other ideological and cultural forms" is a "matter of prime importance" for Marxist analysis (Tony Bennett qtd. in Wolfson 6). At the same time, however, the Lukácsian tradition, including Jameson's influential example, has often led to depreciative readings of *realism*, the Victorian era's dominant fictional form. If, on the one hand, Marxist criticism provides fecund ground for a Victorianist practice that sees literature's formal plasticity as chronotopically marking the movement of actually existing cosmopolitanisms, on the other, influential Marxists like Jameson hinder that end by diminishing the critical status of realism.[10]

Realism has been subject to two relevant lines of critique: on the one hand a poststructuralist mode of argument which finds realist fiction guilty of naïve referentiality and dubious investment in totality and, on the other, the Lukácsian perspective that tasks literature precisely to apprehend totality, but to do so in a revolutionary and utopian way.[11] If on the former view realist fiction naturalizes a bourgeois reality that, in actuality, it helps to construct, on the latter, it is a genuinely progressive form until it loses momentum after the failed European revolutions of 1848. No longer holist and chronotopic like the fiction of Walter Scott and Honoré de Balzac, post-1848 realism is, for Lukács, a welter of disjointed details that symptomatize and sustain bourgeois stasis.

Lukács's influential account of realism entails three interrelated premises important to Victorianist critics: first, that literature's politico-aesthetic potential should be understood as its ability to capture historical movement; second, that such capture, to be meaningful, requires dynamic political conditions; and, third, that post-1848 realism is (therefore) doubly defunct since its mode of historicism is fine-tuned toward revolutionary conditions that have failed to materialize. Two further assumptions about realism follow from, though do not originate in, Lukács's analysis. First, the 1848-centric understanding of political history tends to cast British realism, especially compared to French, as the complacent product of a relatively undramatic political culture. Second, the premise of a bankrupt post-1848 realism sets the stage for the interpretation of modernism as offering a necessary break. Influential Marxist critics such as Jameson thus see modernism (much as modernists themselves did), as both artistically and politically superior to realism. Scholars of nineteenth-century literature often follow suit, preferring the arguably proto-modernist works of experimental realists to those perceived as classical practitioners of the form. The result is a politico-aesthetic calculus that systematically underrates the vitality of Victorian fiction.[12]

Perhaps the most debatable component of this viewpoint is the outdated assumption that mid-Victorian Britain was the scene of an insular and static national culture. In actuality, of

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course, the period that saw realists such as George Eliot and Anthony Trollope publishing their major works, were years of intense political self-consciousness and imperial dynamism. Opening in the aftermath of the Indian rebellion and closing with the emergence of the New Imperialism, this supposed age of equipoise was noteworthy for its reinvention of empire at a time when Britain was also reinventing itself as a mass democracy. It is a period to which no criticism focused on the relatively Eurocentric crises of 1848 can do full justice.

In works such as *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), Jameson describes the challenge to art in the modernist and postmodern eras as one of breaching the cognitive disjunction between localized metropolitan experience and the global conditions that underlie it. Imperialism creates this disjunction by severing the metropole's "fixed-camera view" of itself from the "colonial system" on which it relies ("Cognitive" 349). Colonialism "means that a significant structural segment of the economic system as a whole is now located elsewhere, beyond the metropolis, outside of the daily life and existential experience of the home country, in colonies over the water whose own life experience and life world. . .remain unknown and unimaginable for the subjects of the imperial power" (Jameson, "Modernism" 50–51). As art strives "to invent new and elaborate formal strategies" to represent what would otherwise be absent to metropolitan consciousness, "the modernist moment" emerges ("Cognitive" 350; cf. "Modernism" 44).

The problem with this compelling formulation is its assumption that the disconnect between metropolitan experience and imperial structure begins (like modernism), in the late nineteenth century – with the full-blown emergence of the New Imperialism. In actuality, of course, imperialism's spatial disjunction begins much earlier and – as the product of a long-evolving capitalist globalization – is also more multi-faceted than Jameson's focus on territorial empire allows. Thus, as Garrett Stewart notes in his suggestive geopolitical reading of Charles Dickens's *Dombey and Son*, "the stylistic fallout from colonialism in British fiction is less exclusively modernist than Jameson claims" (192; cf. 203). To be clear: Jameson is not arguing that modernism's "new mutation" represents a fresh attempt to grasp modernity's globalizing dynamic; he is arguing that the latter dynamic is a "new and historically original problem" that creates modernism's geopolitical aesthetic ("Modernism" 44, 51). By contrast, Jameson views most of the nineteenth century as corresponding to "the classical stage of national or market capitalism," a period during which realist representation responded to the intact sovereignty of a fully "immanent" metropolitan life ("Modernism" 51). Whereas modernist and postmodernist art face the challenge of spatial disconnection, realism copes with an earlier "logic of the grid" ("Cognitive" 349). The result is a Marxist criticism that has tended to overlook the imperial encounter's aesthetic impact on realism: the formal vitality of which does not end in1848 but, in many ways, begins in 1857.[13]

What then if Jameson's formulation were revised so as to recognize the global fabric of nineteenth-century literature and culture? To read Victorian fiction as a geopolitical aesthetic would be to view British literature as "world literature" in Moretti's sense while also rejecting the rigid tectonics of core and periphery which shape his assumptions about metropolitan form. According to Moretti, world literature is a "system *of variations*," a long chain of experiments which arises when form migrates from Anglo-French centers to imperial outskirts, creating rich panoplies of aesthetic "compromise between West European patterns and local reality" (64). Yet, while Moretti describes such formal mutations as expressions of geopolitical relations, he portrays English and French form as isolated cases of "autonomous development" – the exceptional germs that precipitate the chain of (literary)

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history (58). Moretti thus repeats the Jamesonian tic of viewing the classical metropole as an autochthonous structure. By contrast, the notion of a *Victorian* geopolitical aesthetic finds nineteenth-century British fiction inside the "system *of variations*" and, thus, fully subject to global dynamics. Much as black Atlantic poiesis expresses the ongoing repercussions of New World slavery – and just as modernist literature refracts the spatial disjunctions of high imperialism – so the Victorian geopolitical aesthetic encompasses formal metamorphoses that might be understood, in part, as a literary tour of actually existing cosmopolitanisms.

One way of contemplating the criticism such thinking could inspire is to compare Stewart's predominantly geopolitical reading of *Dombey and Son* and Anderson's predominantly ethical reading of *Little Dorrit*. Although Stewart's essay sets out to bring formalist nuance to Jameson's method, it also, in doing so, dismisses the latter's classical/national stage, locating Dickens's 1848 novel in a transoceanic matrix – as a "study of mercantile power" (184). Just as Jameson reads modernism's vision of spatial infinity as an expression of imperial disconnect, so Stewart, borrowing the trope of syllepsis from Michael Riffaterre, notes Dickens's "twin vanishing points of oceanic trade and the intertext of death's 'immortal sea'" (185).[14] Thus, in *Dombey*, as in modernist fiction, relations of power which cannot yet be experienced as "conscious objects" are aesthetically rendered as "structurings of consciousness" (193). With such formal percipience in mind, Jameson (in his work on postmodern cinema) defines the geopolitical aesthetic as the expression of "an unconscious collective effort" to "figure out" the "landscapes and forces" embedded in global processes that are at once lived and beyond conscious experience (*Geopolitical* 3). Stewart's Jamesonian reading thus makes Victorian literature the scene of powerful geopolitical awareness.

Yet what follows, of course, is a question provoked by the new cosmopolitanisms: is such a literature as helpful in cultivating an ethos of macro-interdependencies as it is illuminating global materialities? Acute in dramatizing the formal capture of geohistorical process, Jameson's criticism is less deft in illuminating literature's links to the embodied features of lived experience, including those valuable critical stances that Anderson finds in nineteenth-century culture.[15] As Jamesonian chronotope, art illuminates a structural condition that is beyond conscious apprehension, in contradistinction to an art that proffers subjective expressions of transnational experience (such as Boelhower's Atlantic standpoints), or cultural practices that mediate that experience (such as Anderson's cultivated distance). Is it possible to synthesize these views, understanding literature's engagement with history as both structured and subjective, geopolitical and ethical, formal and embodied? The answer, I think, is yes. Just as history's geohistorical and expressive dimensions are "two translations of the same sentence" – and just as the sylleptic capacity to figure two different meanings at once is literature's "sign par excellence" (Rifaterre qtd. in Stewart 185) – so critics need not choose between the entwined critical projects of cosmopolitan ethos and cosmopolitan form.

Compared from this perspective, Stewart and Anderson articulate two faces of the same modern problem – the need to negotiate transnational experiences that are structurally embedded but personally embodied. Reading *Dombey and Son* geopolitically, Stewart describes the novel's "whole panoply of equilibrated structural contradictions" as an almost-but-not-quite redemptive achievement: "a formal recompense for totality's absence from every other life sphere" (203). Reading *Little Dorrit* as an ethical text, Anderson reaches a comparable semi-affirmation: Dickens's tendency to align his own critical aesthetic with modern depravity in the end compromises his grip on the material world.

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Thus, while cosmopolitan ethics turn out to be bound up in geopolitical awareness, the geopolitical aesthetic turns out to dream of a redemptive cosmopolitan ethics. The two critical perspectives complement one another because each implicitly acknowledges the need to integrate expressive and structural dimensions of history by way of recognizing two normative commitments: the poststructuralist imperative to attend cultural difference and the Enlightenment project of realizing the conditions necessary for universal emancipation.

Of course, the critical problem I have so far described is anticipated in many ways by the work of another Marxist critic, Raymond Williams. Although Gilroy, among others, has associated the latter's work with an ethnocentric Marxist tradition, *The Black Atlantic*'s dialectic of structure and poiesis is demonstrably Williams-like.[16] Indeed, Williams's notion of the *structure of feeling* strives to grapple the antinomies of objective embeddedness and subjective embodiment; antinomies that are only intensified by the shift from the nation to transnational matrix or world-system at large. To be sure, the precise meaning of the structure of feeling oscillates in Williams's corpus, never amounting to a systematic theory of the relation between history's geohistorical and expressive dimensions. Still, vis-à-vis Jameson's unconscious geopolitical aesthetic, what is valuable in Williams's approach (as in Gilroy's) is the attention to poiesis and an ethics of the self in tendering material histories. The something beyond structured reality that art strives to descry which, for Jameson, is an absent cause that eludes embodied experience is, for Williams, an elusive quality *of* that experience. Mindful of "social forms," Williams nonetheless prizes lived categories such as "consciousness, experience, [and] feeling," conceiving them as bulwarks against structuralist ossification which defy the immobilization of standpoint, agency, and singularity (*Marxism* 128–9).

I do not claim, of course, that pursuit of the Victorian geopolitical aesthetic magically perfects Williams's long effort to choreograph the tango between structure and feeling.[17] Still less does it harmonize particularity and universality, or poststructuralism and the Enlightenment, in a single stroke. What I do suggest is that a more dialectically conceived critical practice can better recognize Victorian fiction's creative engagement with the same critical questions that appeal to scholars today. As Christopher Prendergast notes, Lukács and Williams were drawn to realist fiction precisely as a form that saw "individual experience and social formation" as "mutually necessary for intelligibility" (18). The rendering of such intelligibility has long been understood as realism's particular aspiration, whether formulated through (what are conventionally described as) Walter Scott's historical romances, Jane Austen's domestic fiction, Charles Dickens's and George Eliot's multi-plot novels, Anthony Trollope's political fiction, or the genre fiction of the later nineteenth century. It follows that Victorian literature only becomes more compelling when the actually existing "social formation" it engages is recognized as being cosmopolitan in scope.

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NOTES

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1. Of course, the term "Victorian" demarcates a field of study which has tended to bound itself geographically as well as temporally, suggesting an oxymoronic tension between cosmopolitanism's global outlook and the scholarly focus on England, the British Isles and, more recently, the British Empire. For the purposes of this essay, by way of avoiding a proliferation of scare quotes, I take "Victorian" primarily to signify the nineteenth-century decades that coincided with Victoria's reign as well as a field of literary and cultural study that, in recent years, has taken a deliberate turn away from the nation-state narrowly defined and toward postcolonial, transnational, transatlantic, and global perspectives on the Anglophone literature of this period. For related essays see, for example, Bristow, Flint, Goodlad and Wright, Marcus, and Irene Tucker.
2. See, for example, the essays collected in Cohen and Dever which describe the novel's "inter-national" provenance.
3. As the economist Desai reminds us, globalization is not a "new phase" of capitalism but "a revival or resumption of a similar phase" dating back to the nineteenth century (16).
4. Significantly, Anderson singles out Gilroy to exemplify the kind of cosmopolitanism which blends ethical and geopolitical awareness (*Powers* 90; n36). Although her reference is to *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line* (2000), a book less central to the Atlantic scholarship I am about to describe, Anderson elsewhere aligns her project of recuperating a critical cosmopolitan tradition within Western culture with Gilroy's black Atlantic goal of rethinking modernity through its "'constitutive relationships with outsiders'" (Gilroy, *Black Atlantic* 17; qtd. in Anderson, "Cosmopolitanism" 272).
5. Gilroy describes his "battle to represent a redemptive critique of the present," informed by slavery's "vital memories," as a complement to the "critique of bourgeois ideology and the fulfillment of the Enlightenment project under the banner of working-class emancipation" (71).
6. Likewise, Gilroy's notion of the Atlantic as a "single, complex unit of analysis" which both constitutes and counters modernity, is subject to an exceptionalism similar to that which prompts his own critique of nationalist paradigms (*Black Atlantic* 15). According to Gikandi, "Gilroy seems to want to write from his own European . . . identity and to assume that the 'parochial' obligation to account for the place of the black subject in the new Europe has some kind of universal implication" (597).
7. Boelhower tries for a more ethically and epistemologically coherent historical materialism with the occasional reference to non-Atlantic locales. At one point he suggests that the ocean "underpins . . . the modern world-system of capitalism" as well as "the stream of narratives of the African, Jewish, Acadian, Italian, and Armenian diasporas," among others, thus linking the latter narratives with the Atlantic project of assigning retroactive sovereignty to "the drowned peoples of Africa" (95). Here Boelhower reverts to the very language of system which prompted his critique of Gilroy in order to evoke a patchwork emancipatory project in which some large swathe of the world's peoples are configured through overlapping diasporas. This inclusive gesture, no doubt, intends to compensate for the exceptionalism elsewhere claimed for "the Atlantic-world order" as distinct from other ocean-inflected matrices (94). But the result would be incoherent even if it did not involve an unexplained embrace of Gilroy's repudiated terms. Boelhower misleadingly characterizes the Atlantic's distinctiveness as primarily ecological in nature even while the history of the slave trade is more self-evidently what "holds all together" in the Atlantic's "common but highly fluid space" (92–93). Thus, when Boelhower writes that "the Atlantic world is made up of many contributing seas, and each of these Atlantic worlds has its own history," positing interconnection between Portuguese, Spanish, French, Dutch, and English variations (99; n21), one is left to wonder why such a pluralistic vision of the trans-aquatic stops with one body of water. A glance at Hall's account of Jamaica's nineteenth-century history makes clear how events in the Caribbean were bound up with contemporaneous Australasia through the alternately ocean- and land-inflected dynamics of imperialism in its various guises (commodity-producing colonies in the West Indies, white settler colonies in North America and the Antipodes, territorial and maritime "free trade" empires across the globe). Where Gilroy's world-systems approach enables him more successfully to adduce African

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diaspora as an archetypal global dynamic, Boelhower's more radically deterritorializing hydroscape, with its determination to break down geographic conceptions of "inside" and "outside" (91), ought vigorously to seek out any number of transoceanic imperial matrices, not occlude them with an underspecified Atlantic exceptionalism.

8. My point is not, of course, to underrate the benefits of a multilingual criticism able to range across archives (though see Moretti's caution about the limitations of simply reading more ["Conjectures"]). I do, however, wish to contrast Marcus's ideal of an extensive Victorianist knowledge to Boelhower's Atlanticist counter part. Boelhower conceives the limitations of Atlanticist expertise as serendipitous opportunities. Quoting the historian Alison Games, he writes that Atlantic history links "several regions, in which no one historian can have the [desired scholarly] competence or expertise," "through multiple perspectives" (Games 750; qtd. in Boelhower 90). "For this very reason," he concludes, "current Atlantic history, at its best, is now . . . methodologically daring . . . as it should be if we consider the ethical and political challenges bequeathed to us by five centuries of modern Western civilization" (Boelhower 90).
9. Where Goswami shows how discourses of nationalism require deeper structural historicization, Sartori, who builds on her example, makes a comparable case for liberalism. Both historians use the term "sociohistorical" to distinguish forms of social organization from particular cultural expressions. In this essay I substitute "geohistorical" for "sociohistorical" in order to emphasize the decidedly global, transnational, and geopolitical forms of organization which cosmopolitan practice must especially attend.
10. Bakhtin's suggestive notion of the *chronotope* as "an optic for reading texts as x-rays of the forces at work in the culture system from which they spring" (426) is another generative concept for historical materialism as well as a significant influence on Gilroy. In this essay I focus on Marxist criticism's problematic legacy for realist fiction. But as Herbert Tucker's recent work suggests comparable problems impact the study of Victorian poetry.
11. For an excellent discussion of critiques of realism, see Shaw.
12. Herbert Tucker suggests a comparable problem for Victorian epic poetry, "a genre whose nineteenth-century history Victorian studies have too readily accepted on distorted Modernist terms" (paragraph 3).
13. Jameson takes the year of the Berlin Conference, 1884, as emblematic of "the codification of the new imperialist world system" ("Modernism" 44). Yet, several much earlier forms of imperial expansion – for example, the slaveholding practices that constitute the black Atlantic; white settlement in North America and Australia; the colonization of Ireland; territorial empire in South Asia; as well as the multifarious impacts of so-called free trade – produced the kind of spatial disconnect that Jameson believes was "new" to the late nineteenth century.
14. Stewart's Rifaterrian definition of syllepsis is "the division from within that overtly sustains two simultaneous strata of apprehensions" (203).
15. *The Political Unconscious* famously argues for a Marxist theory that "decenters" individual consciousness, avoiding the "mirage" of a utopian moment in which individual subjects "become somehow fully conscious of [their ideological] determination" (283). Although cosmopolitan ethics can be sensitive to collective as well as individual consciousness, Jameson's deep-rooted skepticism toward ethical projects in general may stem from unwavering commitment to such decentering (see, for example, *Singular*).
16. See, for example, *Black Atlantic* 10–11 and *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* 49–50. Space does not permit a considered intervention into Gilroy's critique of Williams. Suffice to say that while Gilroy rightly claims that the British cultural studies tradition that includes Williams too often lapses "into what can only be called a morbid celebration of England and Englishness" (*Black* 10), there is little in Williams's efforts to integrate the embedded and embodied aspects of history and experience which would preclude a less provincial account. Indeed, Williams at times anticipates the need to resist ethnocentricism as when he writes that the "complex process" of historical emergence can never be

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grasped wholly in "class terms" since "there is always other social being and consciousness which is neglected and excluded: alternative perceptions of others, in immediate relationships; new perceptions and practices of the material world" (*Marxism* 126).

17. As Simpson writes, "The degree to which the structure of feeling is *not* articulated to the point of 'theoretical satisfaction,' despite its deployment throughout twenty years of major critical work, suggests a strong resistance to such theorization. It is at once central and vague, an insistence on 'something beyond' the extant debate, without any exact address to the terms of that debate" (43).

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