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**Cosmoliteratures:
Cosmopolitanisms in Literatures,
Literatures in Cosmopolitanisms**

Edited by

**Rui Sousa and
Soraya Nour Sckell**



Duncker & Humblot · Berlin

RUI SOUSA/SORAYA NOUR SCKELL (Eds.)

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Introduction

Over the centuries, the concept of Cosmopolitanism has been prolifically and repeatedly used in systematic speculative thought. This is in part due to the influence that open dialogue between people from all over the world has had on the organisation of society and the best way to creatively shape it. The cosmopolitan intention encompasses both the differences between all individuals and the possibility of translating them into a potentially universal theoretical and practical plan. So, this historical continuity and the breadth of its ambitions is also present in the different disciplines and areas of knowledge that can be called upon to study cosmopolitanism or that can benefit from the use of a critical vocabulary derived from cosmopolitan proposals.

This volume aims to explore precisely this diversity. Resulting from a series of conferences held throughout 2022, the contributions gathered here concern the two fields most represented our discussion: literature and political philosophy.

Firstly, marking the meeting between the research project “Cosmopolitanism: Justice, Democracy and Citizenship without Borders” (PTDC/FER-FIL/30686/2017) and Group 1 of CLEPUL (Centre for Lusophone and European Literatures and Cultures, University of Lisbon), the book explores the relationship between issues associated with cosmopolitanism and the field of literature. In fact, throughout Modernity, literature has expanded its scale of intervention, progressively becoming one of the broadest and most representative domains of the permanent questioning of human beings about their individual and collective condition, in different contexts in time and space. Through literature, individuals from all over the world have expressed themselves from their own perspectives and have come into contact with other historically localised manifestations of the human phenomenon. In the European context, for example, it has been through literature that some of the most important questionings of Eurocentric arrogance have taken place and polemical approaches to other continents have been expressed, often in the clandestinity inherent in all discourses that confront totalitarian regimes, which by their nature are not given to reflections of a cosmopolitan nature.

Some important theoretical developments in Literary Theory and the Humanities have explored the way in which literature and other arts can produce important reflections on the uneven development of the literary milieu according to the geographical locations of the different canons, as well as on the need to question the works and literary figures considered representative of a supposed common heritage of humanity. The contemporary notion of “world literature”, in its various theoretical declinations, is one of the facets of a certain modern ambition, even if sometimes only evident in theory, to create a common space in which authors from all over the world could openly engage in dialogue, going beyond geographical borders and thus overcoming the

constraints of different kinds – social, political, religious, sexual ... – that prevail in their respective national contexts. It was an ambition shared by thinkers all over the world and which in Europe corresponded, in some decisive cases, to a first symptom of self-criticism of the limitations of Judeo-Christian civilisation and the need to open it up to a series of freer and more productive formulations of contact with the diversity of possible manifestations of the human condition.

In the field of Political Philosophy, reflections on the concept of cosmopolitanism can be articulated in five main dimensions, found in authors from the most diverse theoretical traditions, discussed in the second part of this volume. The first dimension is that of the “cosmopolitan self”. For a critical cosmopolitanism, the construction of a “cosmopolitan self” is a question of justice. It’s not just a question of studying the normative ethical prescription of cosmopolitanism, but also its reverse side, identity conflicts. Most cosmopolitan theories cannot explain why the universal does not resist nationalism, racism, xenophobia and sexism. The second dimension relates to “cosmopolitan local democracy”. A critical cosmopolitanism aims to develop a democratic theory that, unlike modern democratic theory, considers a local political-legal order to be fully democratic only if it respects the environment and the human rights of all the world’s people, regardless of their citizenship. The third dimension is that of “cosmopolitan law”. A critical cosmopolitanism aims to reformulate state-centred conceptions of modern international law, considering individuals as subjects of international law. This would explain two of the most original international political-legal developments of the 20th century: the right to individual petition in international and regional human rights protection and individual responsibility in international criminal law. The fourth dimension is “cosmopolitics”. A critical cosmopolitanism aims to formulate a concept of “cross-border cosmopolitan citizenship” that differs from the traditional theory of citizenship and representation since it does not have a territorial referent and does not require that those citizens be elected. This would explain the practice of cross-border associations of individuals, whether institutionalised or not. The philosopher Etienne Balibar calls this “cosmopolitics” rather than “cosmopolitanism”. The fifth dimension is “cosmocentrism”. A critical cosmopolitanism aims to create a new form of ecological consciousness, based on the relationship between the cosmopolitan self and the cosmos, which would imply a profound revision of anthropocentric categories.

This volume opens with a first part dedicated to “Literature”, which includes five texts. Nuno Miguel Proença proposes an analysis of Fernando Gil and Helder Macedo’s book *Viagens do Olhar [The Travelling Eye]*, which discusses one of the most important moments in the modern configuration of cosmopolitanism, the Portuguese contribution to the crisis of the European Consciousness at the turn of the XVII Century to the Century of Enlightenment. The paper explores the ambiguous and productive perspectives of Camões, considered the first European artist to express the two main directions of the European relation with the Other in the first centuries of Modernity: the celebration of the nationalistic imperialism and the aspiration of the voyage as possibility of multiple encounters and as an important opening for the development of contacts between different civilizations. The “Lusiads effect” is seen as the main expression of the irremediable tension between the imperialist gaze, marked by the providential mission of the Portuguese nation, and a cosmopolitan gaze, defined by

the meeting and the exchange of knowledge and narratives; a cosmopolitan look that finds its fullest and most complex expression in the plural space of literature.

Pedro António Monteiro Franco explores some questions related to these, taking one of the most successful and controversial novels of Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, as a pretext for reflection on the ambiguity inherent in the literature produced in colonialist contexts and that thematize issues related to that experience. The author questions the problem of the coincidences between Conrad's biography and the novel's problematics, suggesting that in a single work of literature there are, on the one hand, some expressions of an European imperialist worldview of Anglo-Saxon matrix, based on some forms of imperialism, discrimination or dehumanization, and, on the other hand, manifestations of skeptical criticism towards British exceptionalism and colonial violence. In this way, Conrad introduces into the novel multiple points of view, or the experience of a split consciousness, essential to the development of a cosmopolitan interpretation of culture.

Marco Bucaioni, in his paper "How do you say *Afropolitan* in Portuguese? African literatures, black-Portuguese literature and Afropolitanism", offers a completely up-to-date overview of the literature produced by Portuguese Afro-descendants and by some of the most celebrated African writers in the Portuguese language. In order to expose some recent developments in the way in which the literary environment has developed taking into account the essentially cosmopolitan identity of authors such as Grada Kilomba, Kalaf Epalanga, Djaimilia Pereira de Almeida, Yara Monteiro, Raquel Lima, João Melo, João Paulo Borges Coelho, José Eduardo Agualusa, Mia Couto, and others. Bucaioni resorts to international concepts with great critical actuality, namely Afropolitanism – a conception that seeks to apply Cosmopolitanism to African realities – and Afropean, a concept proposed by David Byrne to describe and rightly frame the experience of black Europeans. The paper suggests that, over the last decade, the Afrodescendant literary wave became an important opportunity for Portuguese publishers, however with a negative effect on the market and literary landscape: Afrodescendant authors have taken up the niche position previously occupied by African authors who wrote in Portuguese in the public and the critic's perception.

Sara Fernandes, in her paper "Virginia Woolf & the Cosmopolitan Self", discusses how Woolf's novels, *Mrs Dalloway* and *The Waves*, present her ideas on personal identity in a cosmopolitan sense, which have influenced philosophers such as Hannah Arendt, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Paul Ricœur. Woolf believed in temporal, intersubjective, and historical identity, and understood personal identity as a complex psychological phenomenon that is partially accessible through narrative or aesthetic means. The paper argues that literature has an originality that contributes to the philosophical debate, with philosophy clarifying the concepts and symbols of literary speech and linking its conceptions of the self.

In her text "The invention of the self and the cosmos: cosmology and poetics of the self in the work of Paulo Cardoso", Soraya Nour Sckell discusses the complex combination of philosophy and poetry in the development of the tetralogy of the philosopher and poet Paulo Cardoso Jesus, author of a heteronymous character, Eva Ferreira, who guides different decisive questions about *poiesis* as a hypothesis for the creation of an individual identity situated reflexively in the face of an increasingly widely ex-