

**Deromanticized Cosmopolitanism in Smith's Swing Time and Chi's ??? (Goodnight, Rose)**

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**Volume 20 Issue 1 (March 2018) Article 4**  
**Songyun Zheng,**  
**"Deromanticized Cosmopolitanism in Smith's *Swing Time***  
**and Chi's 晚安玫瑰 (*Goodnight, Rose*)"**

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**Abstract:** In her article "Deromanticized Cosmopolitanism in Smith's *Swing Time* and Chi's 晚安玫瑰 (*Goodnight, Rose*)" Songyun Zheng proposes a theoretical framework of deromanticized cosmopolitanism to conduct a comparative reading of Zadie Smith's *Swing Time*, a transcontinental narrative of London, New York, and Africa, and Zijian Chi's *Goodnight, Rose*, about a Jewish émigré living in Harbin, China. Zheng reframes cosmopolitanism by recognizing its contradictory and multifaceted nature, and questions the assumed connection between cosmopolitanism and cross-boundary activities such as migration and interracial relationships. The two novels form a constellation of deromanticized cosmopolitanism with characters of transcultural backgrounds but also of diasporic and traumatic memories. By exploring characters' different attitudes towards violence, this article presents the dynamic relationship between cosmopolitanism, cruelty, and forgiveness. Zheng concludes through practices of forgiveness and stereotype reconciliation, people can become cosmopolitan and advantageously embrace the uniqueness and otherness in their identities.

## Songyun ZHENG

### Deromanticized Cosmopolitanism in Smith's *Swing Time* and Chi's 晚安玫瑰 (*Goodnight, Rose*)

The concept of cosmopolitanism has been constantly revisited, reframed, and reconstructed. Even though cosmopolitanism has been criticized for its abstraction, illusiveness, absoluteness, and ignorance of uniqueness (see, e.g., Barber; Bok; Falk; Spencer, "Whose Cosmopolitanism"), scholars have been reframing this term by connecting it with reality, and approaching its interactions with individual and society from a dialectic rather than monolithic perspective. Just as Pier Paolo Frassinelli and David Watson contextualize a precarious cosmopolitanism in and after crisis ("Precarious" <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2350>>), Andrew Irving and Galin Tihanov highlight its performative and open-ended characterization, and Richard Sennett and Richard Falk emphasize the importance of taking into consideration its imperfect nature. What can be traced in such a changing understanding is that a romanticization of cosmopolitanism which lacks "thoughtful and self-critical concern" (Spencer, *Cosmopolitan* 49) has been reevaluated through the lens of deromanticization. In this article, the deromanticization of cosmopolitanism indicates, on the one hand, that the evident prosperity of international connections and global belongings can be an ostensible illusion of cosmopolitanism. On the other, it never fails to realize that those who draw transcontinental or transatlantic trajectories in their lives and memories, be they immigrants, émigrés, or their descendants, are constantly seeking openness, connection, and intimacy despite the fact that they have their hidden secrets, and may have endured injustice, cruelty, and abuse. Deromanticized cosmopolitanism accepts the quotidian, contradictory, and multifaceted nature of cosmopolitanism, and gains its insightfulness by recognizing and reaching beyond established stereotypes. It obtains its impetus by treating cosmopolitanism dialectically, embracing both opportunities and obstacles created in the contacts and conflicts across cultures. The deromanticized cosmopolitanism conceptualized in this article serves as a theoretical framework for a comparative study of Zadie Smith's *Swing Time* and Zijian Chi's *Goodnight, Rose*. These two novels which transcend continents, cultures, religions, and ethnography form a pair of transcultural equivalents that display a constellation of deromanticized cosmopolitanism that is imperfect yet never lacks humanity. This article compares and reflects on the different life trajectories drawn by the Black, the Jew, and the displaced. It discloses that the ever-developing cosmopolitanism constantly interacts with deromanticized elements including cruelty, violence, secrets as well as ostensible cosmopolitan impressions. Correspondingly, it highlights that these elements play a crucial role in regards to the formation of a cosmopolitan attitude, which accepts "who we are" and which, in Jacques Derrida's words, "forgives the unforgivable" ("On Forgiveness" 39).

It is of particular importance at the beginning to consider two discussions on cosmopolitanism published in *The Boston Review*—some of the responses were republished in *For Love of Country?* and in *Whose Cosmopolitanism: Critical Perspectives, Relationalities and Discontents* respectively. The former, which contains the responses from scholars to a largely romanticized version of cosmopolitanism proposed by Martha C. Nussbaum, treats the problematic nature of viewing this concept as a utopian ideology. The latter in contrast challenges fixed assumptions of cosmopolitanism by taking into account deromanticized elements. In Nussbaum's article "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," she envisages a romanticized cosmopolitanism. Though it is philosophical and impressive, this conceptualization is in fact void, abstract, and static (Falk, "Revisioning"; Glazer, "Limits"; McConnell, "Don't"; Pinsky, "Eros"). A more credible, realistic, and convincing cosmopolitanism should take into consideration human insufficiency (Sennett, "Christian" 13), commercial homogeneity (Falk, "Revisioning" 57), and should confront rather than sidestep "a double or contradictory imperative within cosmopolitanism" (Critchley and Kearney, "Preface" x). Compared to Nussbaum's idealized philosophical version of cosmopolitanism, Julia Kristeva in her discussion sees in Fougeret de Monbron a "malevolent cosmopolitanism" which replaces tenderness and recognition with hatred and emptiness—a disclosure of "the violence and strangeness of the subjective facet of cosmopolitanism" (*Strangers* 142). If Nussbaum and Kristeva show us two ends of the spectrum of cosmopolitanism—one dominated by love, and the other by hatred—a cosmopolitanism of efficacy is located somewhere in the middle. That is why the discussion centered on the question "whose cosmopolitanism" is intriguing, and can be regarded as a timely response to our comprehension of this concept.

Cosmopolitanism, in some rejoinders to the question "whose cosmopolitanism," is influenced by a joint force of "contingency and consistency" (Irving, "Chance" 72), and refuses "hegemonic assumptions" or stereotypical ascriptions on any social groups (Schiller, "Diasporic" 103). Tihanov's response

is fueled with contemplations beyond stereotypes, as he revisits cosmopolitanism by highlighting that it should not be "norm-orientated" but rather "non-fixed," and that it retains its intensity and controversial nature in "diverse historical settings" ("Narratives" 155). He also argues that those who are émigrés might not feel cosmopolitan at all, and living in an exotic land can hinder creativity rather than stimulate it. A new cosmopolitanism for Tihanov is "open-ended, reversible and thus uncertain" (155) and cannot be properly approached without taking into consideration the "political tensions and contradictions of the societies in which it unfolds" (155). Some other scholars who join in this discussion contend that it might be problematic to restrict this conception to the fields of philosophy and politics. For Irving, cosmopolitanism is a form of "performative action" ("Chance" 73), and a "quotidian methodological activity" (72) and "subjectivity" (70) divorced from an abstract or philosophical position. Cosmopolitanism is not transparent or neatly sealed but rather draws a picture full of ambivalence and occlusion (Stacey, "Whose" 35; Valluvan, "Cosmopolitanism" 76) in which people can recognize themselves when they recall their daily rhythm. Returning to Tihanov's arguments, we need to look beyond the European version of cosmopolitanism, avoid the seemingly divergent yet literally convergent metanarratives in comprehending this concept, and embrace race, class, and gender so as to reevaluate "their fruitfulness for cosmopolitanism." ("Whose" 30)

The significance of thinking beyond conventional versions of cosmopolitanism in this article can be subdivided into five layers. Firstly, following Schiller, I adopt an extended understanding of diaspora, that points to anyone, be they locals or immigrants, who lack a sense of belonging or feel displaced. Secondly, in terms of the imagination of cosmopolitanism, those who travel widely but refuse to get involved in local cultures, or those who even though born with a biracial or multiracial lineage, refuse to recognize or accept their self but constantly seek to become the "other," cannot be regarded as cosmopolitans. Thirdly, the impetus of cosmopolitanism lies in its imperfectness, and that is why many of the responses discussed above that focus on the deromanticized and multifaceted features of cosmopolitanism seem to be more reasonable and cogent. This echoes Tihanov's reflection on deromanticizing and deliberalizing exile ("Narratives" 142) as it is not until we begin to be aware of the existence of forced cosmopolitanism and start to understand that cosmopolitanism can be illusive and counterbalancing, are we able to approach this complex phenomenon more objectively. The perception of cosmopolitanism needs freedom—the freedom which in Zadie Smith's eyes does not pin Shakespeare down to a single identity ("Speaking" <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2009/02/26/speaking-in-tongues-2/>>). Cosmopolitanism needs the freedom which in Kristeva's world of strangers creates opportunities for us to admit and accept the strangeness in ourselves (*Strangers* 115). Fourthly, I would like to borrow Schiller's expression of "encompassed concept" ("Diasporic" 106) to describe the immigrants discussed in this article. It points to a broader notion which includes the first-generation immigrants and their descendants, as well as people who move across places, continents, and cultures, and who are absorbed in an environment that is different from their original counterpart. Deromanticized cosmopolitanism calls for an awareness of cosmopolitanism's imperfection, a recognition of its semitransparent nature, a revisit of its dynamic connection with cruelty, violence, and secrets, and a rethinking of the relationship between these bleak sides of reality and cosmopolitanism. Fifthly, conceiving deromanticized cosmopolitanism inspires minimizing the effects of uncontrollable elements, especially genes, parents, and birthplaces, and focuses on "the existential fact of their belonging to the human race and their capacity to act with and alongside others" (Irving, "Chance" 66), or as Smith writes, "it was important to treat oneself as a kind of stranger, to remain unattached and unprejudiced in your own case" (*Swing* 121). "Coming of age" which is used by Durga Chew-Bose in her definition of *Swing Time* (<<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books-and-media/book-reviews/review-zadie-smiths-swing-time-follows-a-childhood-friendship-through-the-years/article33047714/>>) is also applicable to cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism is a becoming, a process of gaining an ever-developing ideology in terms of how to treat self and the other. As for the word choice, I prefer "surrounding" to "society", and "community" to "world" because it is important to be rooted in specificity before we are able to gain an insight into a larger picture of cosmopolitanism.

*Swing Time* unfolds its story of two brown girls—an unnamed narrator and her friend Tracey—who are innately transcultural with British and African origins. It also takes a close up shot of Aimee who is a billionaire superstar, and the employer of the narrator, Louie, who is Tracey's criminal and violent father, and the narrator's mother who is Jamaican-rooted, a strong-minded social activist and local councilor. Comparing *Swing Time* with Smith's other four novels, *White Teeth* is more dazzlingly multicultural, *The Autograph Man* and *NW* are more experimental, and *On Beauty* focuses more on aesthetic appreciation. *Swing Time*, according to Simon Leser ("Forget" <<https://theculturetrip.com/europe/united-kingdom/england/articles/forget-white-teeth-swing-time-is-zadie-smith-s-masterpiece/>>) and Taiye Selasi ("Swing" <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/nov/13/swing-time-zadie-smith-rev>

iew>), is Smith's best novel so far, exploring the becoming of self, the existential adversity, and the controversy between subjective consciousness and objectivity—characteristics which correspond appropriately to the conception of deromanticized cosmopolitanism. *Goodnight, Rose* depicts a story of two women different in age, race, and belief—a Soviet-Russian-rooted Jewish old lady Léna Ji living in Harbin, the capital city of Heilongjiang Province, China, and her young tenant Xiao'e Zhao in her twenties who works in Harbin and grew up in Keshan, a rural county in the same province. A local of Heilongjiang Province and a winner of the Mao Dun Literary Prize, Chi has been recognized internationally. Her works have been translated into different languages, and *The Last Quarter of the Moon*, her critically-acclaimed novel translated into English by Bruce Humes, is praised as "epic" and "atmospheric." (see Falconer, Kelly <<https://www.ft.com/content/bb835fd0-5f0a-11e2-8250-00144feab49a>>; see also Housham, Jane <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/jan/10/the-last-quarter-of-the-moon-chi-zijian-review>>.) *Goodnight, Rose* which has been translated into French is also expressive in its depiction of trauma and life's complexity, and together with *Swing Time*, both novels are "never strident or dictatorial" but "provoke thought via complex, multifarious, and inconclusive renderings of particular situations." (Spencer, *Cosmopolitan* 59)

Smith and Chi break established stereotypes by indicating that being cosmopolitan does not necessarily connect with "being mixed," be it in race, culture, or religious beliefs. Both novels include descriptions of and reflections on power and violence, cruelty and secrets, and the shadow of blackness and displacement, which are inseparable elements in the life trajectories of the protagonists. Approaching cosmopolitanism from a deromanticized perspective means reframing this concept beyond stereotyped perceptions by taking into account the contradictory components which also play their parts in constructing the vitality of this term. The essence of such a perception finds its literary equivalent in Smith's and Chi's novels, which include unfairness and cruelty as well as violence and discrimination—elements appear to go against the imagination of a cosmopolitan ideal. Nonetheless it is through the interaction with the unpleasant that a refreshed understanding of cosmopolitanism begins to form.

Life of the diasporic and the displaced is associated with deromanticization. People of traumatic memories may find themselves living as stereotypes, just as black and Jewish people are associated with diaspora, mistreatment, and disenfranchisement. But in Smith's and Chi's novels, romanticization and deromanticization which simultaneously affirm and transcend stereotypes coexist together. Smith is a moral realist who challenges readers' idealistic expectations. In *Swing Time*, when the narrator's mother is giving passionate lectures about the pride of black people being "beautiful, intelligent, capable, kings and queens, in possession of a history, in possession of a culture, in possession of ourselves" (Smith 240), Tracey's black father Louie complains that "we feel like we're nothing, we feel like we're at the bottom of the pyramid" (185). Smith depicts people's suffering in the U.S., whether it is articulated through the experience of Granger, who is hired as Aimee's bodyguard because of his height and skin color, or through the memory of an American-African, who when lived in Texas was a victim of discrimination. Granger dreams of being raised in a small African village by fifteen mothers, and that woman originally from the U.S. falls in love with a local African boy half her age with whom she establishes her new home in Africa. Jeni LeGon, who is an idol of Tracey and the narrator, dances like a dream with other celebrated white dancers including Frederick Astaire and Eddie Cantor. However, behind such a romanticized imagination, LeGon, in reality, is only treated as a shadow and a helper. In Astaire's mind, "she not only played a maid, she was in actuality little different from the help" (*Swing* 428). Smith deliberately breaks the romanticized imagination to remind us of the traumatic memories, inviting us to think about how to face African-origin immigrants' unpleasant or even humiliating experiences. In this regard, the narrator of the novel might have helped us to answer this question, as she talks to herself: "I did not want to rely on each European fact having its African shadow, as if without the scaffolding of the European fact everything African might turn to dust in my hands" (*Swing* 294). This is a declaration against stereotyped minds, and following the same tune, the diaspora, in Smith's novel, is never only about the Black, but also the white; and the deromanticized elements are not entirely dominated by poverty of the African island but also composed of the struggling of single mothers and the memories of stamped food in a "cosmopolitan" city like New York. An equivalent impression can also be found in *Goodnight, Rose* where Léna, an unmarried émigré in her eighties, accepts the homeless Xiao'e to live in her apartment for free, and makes the girl feel the warmth of home.

It is a general impression that immigrants and émigrés who are "outsiders" can usually be marked by strangeness and foreignness because, initially, they may not have personal connections with or sentimental attachments to the environment that they currently live in. That, however, is only part of the whole picture. Kristeva invites us to rethink the ostensibly explicit and clear-cut division between

natives and immigrants, and points out that even though it seems paradoxical, foreignness is within each individual and defines everyone (*Strangers* 194-95). "The foreigner" is the "hidden face of our identity" (*Strangers* 1), and cosmopolitans can see themselves in others. When we turn our attention to the people who are "flayed", and who have experienced both "the banquet of hospitality" and the "temporary frailty" of difference in harmony (12), we will be aware of the importance of realizing the consciousness of the unconscious, and thence have a differentiated and refined understanding of cosmopolitanism. Similarly, if we have a second thought on the judgment "you are an exile, a needy stranger" (Danaids qtd. in Kristeva, *Strangers* 47), we might find that exile does not always relate to need, definitely not in the case of Léna, who has her life, and her god, and never feels lonely. Just as the sense of foreignness is not only applicable to "foreigners", the obvious cosmopolitan features are very likely to be the opposite of the aura of cosmopolitanism.

People who travel widely—an act that directly or indirectly relates to exposure to diversified environments—are not necessarily cosmopolitans. It might be more appropriate to define cosmopolitans as those who, while interacting cross-culturally, begin to establish an intimate relationship with local cultures. The once exotic experience transforms them by influencing their world values and by directing them to be clearer about how to treat others and themselves without going to extremes or becoming hysterical or depressed. Cosmopolitans, in my definition, point to those who learn to appreciate, be moderate and understanding, and who consciously try to make people around them feel comfortable instead of uneasy. Fernando, the Brazilian operator for Aimee's school project, is well educated, having a Ph.D. degree and professional experience. As the narrator observes, he is always "listening, learning, asking for more detail" (Smith, *Swing* 249), and is "locked in intense discussion with men and women of every age and circumstance, crouching by them as they ate, jogging next to donkey-drawn carts, sitting drinking *ataya* with the old men by the market stalls" (*Swing* 249). By looking closely, Fernando, as the narrator realizes at last, is able to see "the larger, structural problems" (*Swing* 449). Aimee, who the narrator and Fernando work for, who in the narrator's comment should "take everything, have everything, do everything, be everyone, in all places" (340), and who has a global accent which is "New York and Paris and Moscow and LA and London combined" (95), is only an ostensible cosmopolitan. With personal wealth higher than the GDP of the whole country in which she would like to build a girls' school, Aimee goes to a local hotel to "rest" after arriving at the island, leaving the girls who are arranged to welcome her waiting in vain for six hours. During her visit, she quickly becomes interested in a young man called Lamin, the narrator's local guide, and is concerned more about flirting with him than the overall projects made by local leaders and Fernando. After she manages to bring Lamin to New York, she derides his custom, feeling "very provocative and funny" (*Swing* 366) because he still prays five times a day. The "typical" cosmopolitan features that can be easily recognized in Aimee do not have a direct connection with cosmopolitanism, and she remains a wealthy celebrity who lives in her stereotyped sense of superiority. The contradictory characteristic between superficial reality and essential truth is also traceable in the narrator's distinctive and self-educated mother. She is easily irritated by household duties, regarding them as "domestic oppression" (*Swing* 55) and is eager to become an accomplished woman in a publicly acknowledged sense; she ignores her husband's invariable love because his "lack of ambition" (20); and she, after divorce and during her relationship with an activist, expresses her pride and her power of self-transformation, and emphasizes that "we can't be nostalgic" and "we've no home in the past" (310). Therefore, despite her campaigns against the "dictatorships" (*Swing* 334) implemented by people like Aimee, she is, in the narrator's eyes, living "in exactly the kind of bourgeois fantasy she'd always bad-mouthed" (309), and according to the not totally unfair accusation from Judy, who is Aimee's loyal manager, she is "hurting the people she claims to want to help" (334). So even though the narrator's mother is a Jamaican immigrant, who once married a white local Englishman and spends her life time involving in the issue of blackness, her seemingly cosmopolitan uniqueness is nothing but an illusion. Smith, as a realist, portrays characters in contradictory lenses through which we have a more sophisticated view of cosmopolitanism.

Similarly, in *Goodnight, Rose*, Weina Huang who is the best friend of Xiao'e and a chief correspondent in a local newspaper agency has interviewed numerous people with various cultural traditions and heritages. She travels widely and develops a multicultural social network, and she becomes acquainted with Léna when she participates in making a documentary about Jews in Harbin. However, such a seemingly "peculiar, independent, magnanimous, and elegant woman" (Chi, *Goodnight* 78; unless indicated otherwise, all translations are mine) can turn out to be selfish and narrow-minded when facing life's problems. She is not empathetic to her husband's patients, who not only pay for expensive treatments but also give "extra money" to the doctor, wishing to have the best hospitalization experience possible. With her husband's "grey income" and their decent salary, the couple meets

few difficulties in purchasing an apartment and a vehicle—"achievements" which make Xiao'e feel unpleasant and disgusted. Correspondingly, Deming Qi, who is the boyfriend of Xiao'e, and who, like Aimee, is "constantly on a plane" (Smith, *Swing* 155), could not be further from being a cosmopolitan. When he thanks Xiao'e for stopping a thief from stealing his wallet, he also explicitly says that if put in the same position, he might just ignore the thievery. Whenever he travels, he carries with him a shroud, not because he is prepared to accept unexpected death with calm and serenity, but the opposite, because of his fear of death, his feeling of uncertainty, and his lack of confidence in the world and the future. As a person of multicultural experiences and memories, Léna is different from Weina and Deming. Like the fellow countrymen described by Chi in her essay, Léna is "kind, tolerant, generous, resiliently calm, and transcendent" ("The Place" 149), and treats Xiao'e like a family member. She prepares ginger root tea for Xiao'e during Harbin's freezing winter and tells her to "come home early in the evening" (26) even after the young tenant behaves impolitely and says offensive words to her. Léna invites Xiao'e, Weina, and Weina's son Linlin to celebrate Jewish Passover, teaches Xiao'e biblical stories of Moses when the young girl feels depressed, and in the last few days before her death, changes the apartment's successor to the miserable girl who is penniless, has no parents, and suffers from a shameful past. Xiao'e is conceived at a cemetery where her mother is raped by a man, who, years later, happens to work in the printing factory run by Deming's father, Cangxi Qi. Cangxi is another example of cosmopolitan love and empathy. Most of his employees are former prisoners, and he often says: "If being provided with a way to make a living, who would end up in a blind alley?" (*Goodnight* 38) His impartiality, interestingly, stems from an experience of imprisonment, which is a consequence of behaving violently to a man who humiliates people from Northeast China where Cangxi's hometown Harbin is located. He never hides his criminal past, and says to Xiao'e at their first meeting: "I had been in prison, and what a former prisoner values most is sunshine and freedom!" (*Goodnight* 102) What is notable is that it is after going through the traumatic experience of being a victim of violence that Cangxi gradually begins to rethink how to treat others, especially former prisoners, who endure the harshness of prejudice and discrimination.

This draws our attention to the characters' different attitudes towards violence and cruelty, and how such varied perceptions transform their lives accordingly. There is a common combination of violence and power, as Hannah Arendt suggests, and along with cruelty, these three elements are somehow interconnected with and inseparable from one another (*On* 46-47). In *Swing Time*, Tracey is torn by violence, especially by her criminal father who has a number of illegal children, frequently flees to Jamaica after committing crimes, and even sexually abuses her. As a child, Tracey resists her "black" identity, as she constantly wants to prove that she is "a little paler" (*Swing* 179) than the narrator, and is "hostile" (76) towards the white classmate Lily, ignoring the fact that this innocent girl prefers to be "colour blind" and see only what is in people's hearts (116). As a teenager, she communicates with others in an imaginary world, claiming that she has a successful father who is building an estate for her in Jamaica. After she begins to dance professionally, she changes her name to Tracee Le Roy, making the narrator ask: "who are you pretending to be now?" (*Swing* 358) At last, as a distressed mother of three, she blames blackness, the injustice of life, and agitatedly tells the narrator: "People like you think you can control everything. But you can't control me!" (406) Tracey's life trajectory seems to be more real and stereotyped than fictional and romanticized—confirming the "unavoidable fates" (167) predicted by the narrator's mother and corresponding to the imaginations of black people in diaspora. Her seeming indifference to whites and to people who care about her is only a shield, which, as she wishes, would help her to hide her vulnerability. "Indifference", says Kristeva, will result in becoming "someone that is not you" and will lead to "hatred" (*Strangers* 13), which, in Tracey's case, results in cruelty. When we follow Smith's narration across the Atlantic, there are many girls on the island who belong to "Tracey's tribe," as they have Tracey's appearance and are bright quick learners. When exploring across time and media, we see Tracey's "heart-shaped face, the adorable puffy cheeks, the compact body" and "the long limbs" (*Swing* 192) in LeGon, who dances in the film *Ali Baba Goes to Town*. The connection that transcends space, history, and continents between Tracey and many Traceys is obvious: talent and appearance, but there are differences too. These many Traceys on the island are too poor to pay the school fee, but they have not given up, and in LeGon's eyes, there is "no hint of Tracey's brand of cruelty" (*Swing* 192)—the cruelty which the narrator has "always detected in her [Tracey's] face" (358). Tracey's cruelty is intensified and fortified by violence, and whenever she struggles, she responds even more hysterically. The school girls and LeGon are like Tracey's African doublings as they share the commonalities of talent and beauty that are unique and not replicable. But the cosmopolitan ties and imaginations end up as an illusion when we find out that, Tracey, who stops dancing, become "an anxious, heavy-set, middle-aged" mother (*Swing* 400), and who goes to another extreme by behaving like a racist in reverse, resenting the white, the visible, and

the capable. Her refusal to accept "who she is" leads to the tragedy of treating others with equal cruelty and violence.

In terms of cruelty and violence, we may find Tracey's doubles in Léna and Xiao'e, and the two women in turn share commonalities with each other. Léna and Xiao'e both have a secret past—the former covertly murders her stepfather, and the latter forces her biological father to commit suicide. Similar to Tracey's consciousness of being black, Xiao'e feels "impure" and inferior for being an illegitimate child (Chi, *Goodnight* 60). Pregnant through rape, her mother gives birth to Xiao'e, and does everything to protect the child from being harmed, even though for most of the times, Xiao'e is still cursed and humiliated by her father and aunt. Lying on her deathbed, the mother of Xiao'e tells her twelve-year-old: "Forget your [generic] identity. Life is short and be happy" (*Goodnight* 57). However, Xiao'e is constantly troubled by the miseries that life has forced on her, and although her biological father begs for her forgiveness, her belief of "Rapists are bastards! They deserve to die!" (127) forces the penitent man to drown himself in the river. Léna's story with her stepfather is heavier and more suffocating. After Léna's father, a violin maker, is beaten to death in Yekaterinburg, Léna's mother, pregnant with the unborn girl, escapes from Soviet Russia to Harbin. Her mother remarries to a Polish Jew who has a business partnership with the Japanese. Léna's stepfather and a Japanese senior officer conspire to force Léna to accept an arranged marriage by letting the officer rape her after she is drugged into unconsciousness. Shocked by her stepfather's cruelty, Léna first feigns madness, and then begins secretly putting arsenic trioxide into his opium pipe, which slowly kills him. Whereas Xiao'e, like Tracey, does not feel guilty by acting violently towards life's cruelty, Léna uses half of her lifetime to cleanse her sin, to forgive, and to love.

Derrida says that "if there is something to forgive, it would be what in religious language is called moral sin, the worst, the unforgivable crime or harm" ("On Forgiveness" 32). Chi shows us a person's life experience of becoming a cosmopolitan, who has experienced rage and violence, and who used to react cruelly but eventually responds to cruelty with love and forgiveness. Léna says to Xiao'e: "With love, anywhere can become home; with hate, anywhere can be a place for self-salvation" (*Goodnight* 143). After more than half a century, "her love had never changed, but her hate to her stepfather had weakened considerably" (*Goodnight* 140); and a place with both her love and hate is her home, which explains why Léna does not leave Harbin as many other Jews did after the Israeli Declaration of Independence. Before Léna passes away, she bestows her apartment to Xiao'e as a gift, which symbolizes the best wishes for the girl's betterment, and an expectation for her to be merciful and forgiving. James and Darryl, a New York gay couple in *Swing Time*, who are US-American and African-American respectively, also epitomize the connection of love, forgiveness, and cosmopolitanism. When the narrator is fired by Aimee and suddenly becomes homeless, the couple provides "immediate, characteristically generous" help to this girl who is practically a stranger to them (Smith, *Swing* 433). Nevertheless, when she impulsively determines to ruin the reputation of her former employer by emailing the facts of her illegal adoption of an African baby girl to news agencies, they sincerely tell her, out of love, that she is "still very young" (*Swing* 434). This middle-aged couple is a "mixed combination", but unlike Aimee, such "boundary-crossing" is connected with cosmopolitanism which embraces the history and the past "but not deformed by it" (*Swing* 433), and which is protected "by love" (433), and blessed with forgiveness. If the narrator is "still young" in her thirties, then her mother uses nearly a life's time to become a cosmopolitan. After being brought to a hospice, she says to the narrator: "[Tracey] was a part of our family, practically" (*Swing* 394), despite the fact that she once drew a clear distinction between the two girls, and despite all the depressing emails Tracey has sent to disgrace her. Her mother's death is like a restart of the narrator's life, as the narrator finds that there might be something "simpler, more honest" that she can offer (453). When the narrator is heading towards Tracey's home, and when she sees "[Tracey's] children around her, everybody dancing" (453), it is a sign that she will forgive Tracey's cruelty—depressing emails, harsh words, and insulting messages. Forgiveness, for the narrator, is a means of salvation, which may help her to stop being a shadow of others, accept who she is, and transform her multicultural heritage into cosmopolitan mercy and kindness.

Both novels end with a reflection on "time." For the narrator in *Swing Time*, "time was on my side", and the hope and uncertainty of the future give her "a new feeling" (Smith 450); but for Xiao'e, "time was drained and meaningless" (Chi, *Goodnight* 156). The distinctive differences between them may be associated with their different attitudes towards forgiveness: while the narrator begins to understand forgiveness, Xiao'e still regards it as impossible, as she asks Léna: "Is it guilty even if we kill a devil?" (*Goodnight* 140) Chi leaves the story with an open ending, and hopefully, by living in Léna's apartment, and thinking of the old lady's expectation that "I hope you could realize the meaning of mercy. Mercy will bring you peace and joy" (*Goodnight* 144), Xiao'e will eventually realize the essence



of love and forgiveness; and equally, there is a possibility for Tracey and her three children to step out of the shadow of stereotypes with the help of the narrator, who realizes at the end of the book that "I was her sister: I had a sacred duty towards her" (448).

The deromanticized cosmopolitanism in Smith's and Chi's novels resists avoiding unpleasant images in life, which go hand in hand with cosmopolitan ideal. By taking into account contradictions in reality, it reveals a process of becoming cosmopolitan. Deromanticized cosmopolitanism considers contradictory parts of life as its fabric, and reminds us that in order to understand cosmopolitanism, we need to reach beyond surfaces and stereotypes—an attitude which, in turn, opens another window for us to approach the differentiated relationship between cruelty and cosmopolitanism in the novels. In a word, the impetus of deromanticized cosmopolitanism is gained from both driving and opposing forces, and it is through a reflection of the worst that we begin to think about what is best for us. That is what Sennett and Falk concern about when they respond to Nussbaum's cosmopolitanism, and what Tihanov, Irving, and Schiller along with other scholars remind us when they dedicate a cosmopolitanism to those who are struggling. Chi once said: "In my childhood ... I believed that the whole world is as big as Beiji County [where she grew up]", but it is not until she has travelled around the world and sees the multiple sides of it when she realizes that "the world in my mind has not changed, and it is a tiny Beiji County" ("The Place" 152). Her observation echoes with the significance of what a "full human being" should be like in Smith's contemplation of Zora Neale Huston, who refuses to consider herself as "a minority, another, an exotic or something depleted in rights, talents, desires and expectations" and who regards blackness "as natural and inevitable and complete to her as ... Frenchness to Flaubert" ("Their Eyes" 11). The resonance between the two authors helps us to understand deromanticized cosmopolitanism: it is until we recognize the world's multifaceted nature that we will be able to see LeGon and Huston as a dancer and a writer beyond blackness, and equally, begin to accept who we are.

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