

Colonial Cosmopolitanism? Resistance, Aesthetics, and Modernism in Patrick Anderson's Prose

Philip Holden refers to the modernist cosmopolitanism in the work of Canadian poet and travel writer Patrick Anderson as an “exemplary failure” (483) that he considers significant not because of the flaws of the particular text or author, but instead because of the larger theoretical problems with the modernist project that the work seems to encapsulate. In Anderson’s travel writing, cosmopolitanism adheres to colonial systems of power. As a result, Holden argues that Anderson acts as an exemplary failure because, “despite [his] ethical commitment” (491) and “his best intentions” (492), his writing is “ultimately conditioned by his position within inescapable colonial discourse and colonial structures of governance” (492). Indeed, Holden’s criticism of Anderson highlights the salient problem of cosmopolitan vision associated with modernist writing at mid-twentieth century. Modernist writers often think globally, incorporating into their literature a utopian desire for cross-cultural communication and globalized ethics; however, this impulse is somewhat undermined by the logic of economic and cultural imperialism. This paper turns to Patrick Anderson’s travel writing to interrogate the way that Anderson’s form of modernist cosmopolitanism becomes a strategy for questioning colonialism. Focusing on the unstable narrative voice in Anderson’s travel memoir of Singapore, *Snake Wine*, I consider the limits of Anderson’s expression of cosmopolitan vision. Anderson’s writing exemplifies a critical engagement with modernist cosmopolitanism’s colonial impulses, and identifies the centrality of self-reflection in confronting and resisting internalized colonial attitudes.

Cosmopolitanism as a concept has been criticized by some postcolonial theorists as a tool of Western imperialism. A global ethics defined by the

West and promoted by the West outside of itself bears similarities to colonial mandates to “enlighten” using ethnocentric standards. To acknowledge these weighty allegations and to retheorize a global ethics that moves beyond the colonial/elite origins of cosmopolitanism as a concept, other theorists have offered alternative, local-based readings. These include Homi K. Bhabha’s “vernacular cosmopolitanism” (43) grounded in local communities that translate and speak back to the West, and James Clifford’s “discrepant cosmopolitanism” (108) that acknowledges the diasporic and travelling nature of cultures that operate within power relations around the world. Indeed, even Kwame Anthony Appiah’s frequently cited “rooted cosmopolitanism” (232) brings together a sense of universal humanity that should govern ethical interactions with an individual or community’s “roots” that privilege relations between some individuals or groups over others.

But, these qualified neo-cosmopolitanisms have yet to substantially nuance the coexistence of cosmopolitan vision and colonial ideology in works of literary modernism. Recent scholarship on modernism and cosmopolitanism suggests that one of the main contributions literary writers make to cosmopolitan studies is a critical assessment of individual and cultural responses to difference through questioning or criticizing their own biases. Rebecca L. Walkowitz argues that literary writers engage in acts of “critical cosmopolitanism” by “comparing, distinguishing, and judging among different versions of transnational thought; testing moral and political norms, including the norms of critical thinking; and valuing informal as well as transient models of community” (2). She demonstrates how modernist style is caught up in significant critical acts, including “double consciousness, comparison, negation, and persistent self-reflection” (2). Walkowitz’s thinking is in line with that of Cyrus R. K. Patell, who advocates for “cosmopolitan irony”; he suggests that literary writers scrutinize cultural assumptions by cultivating a critical distance in their work (15). From this critical assessment, modernists can then conceive of relationships with others in new ways. As Jessica Berman suggests, cosmopolitan attitudes in modernist writing can also be linked to alternative community formation: “modern narratives of community arise in the movement and translation of foreign experience (whether of the past or of a geographically distant place) into common experience and the concomitant and never-ending movement back towards the foreign experience that this process entails” (19). Modernist scholars see great potential in literary works for representing complexity, resisting colonialism, and articulating new forms of communal engagement.

While modernist critics identify colonial resistance in modernist writing, conventions of genre complicate this resistance. Colonial resistance is particularly fraught in travel writing, a genre that has been integral to the discursive formation of empire. When colonial subjects travel and write about colonized places, their acts of writing risk authenticating the imperialist desire both to know and control others.¹ Debbie Lisle argues that colonialism and cosmopolitanism “exist in a complex relationship with one another—sometimes antagonistic, sometimes symbiotic, sometimes ambiguous” (5). She finds value in travel writing’s ability to offer “incomplete articulations of power that offer compelling moments of resistance” (23). Anderson’s travel writing, while inherently shaped by his privilege as a white, male, settler-colonial subject, also clearly articulates how modernist visions of cosmopolitanism make space for resistance to the systemic power of colonialism. Building from Lisle’s work, I explore the potential value and limitation of reading Anderson’s travel writing as what I call “colonial cosmopolitanism.” Colonial cosmopolitanism is a form of cosmopolitan thought that brings its inherent contradiction to the fore. Anderson’s travel writing, with its inward gaze, self-critical narration, and engagement with difference, suggests that one of the central contributions Anderson makes in this period is defining colonial cosmopolitanism in the genre of travel writing. In this article, I demonstrate some of the ways that Anderson’s colonial cosmopolitanism is critical of cosmopolitanism, while continuing to tease out the “exemplary failure” (Holden 483) of colonial cosmopolitanism to extricate itself from colonial ideology.

Early Cosmopolitanism in Anderson’s Modernist Prose

As Bridget T. Chalk demonstrates in *Modernism and Mobility*, national identity and its administration cannot be separated from mobility and cosmopolitanism in works of literary modernism; changing notions of nation dovetail with new conceptions of cosmopolitanism. So, cosmopolitanism in Canada can be better defined comparatively and historically—as an engaged reflection on the interrelations between the local, national, and international. By understanding these interrelations, Canadian cosmopolitanism encourages an ethics of awareness and connection that links disparate people and places and their various collective identities, including national and artistic identities. In this section, I present Anderson’s initial cosmopolitan vision in the context of the Canadian modernist tradition to which his work contributes in order to better trace the development of his colonial cosmopolitan vision after travelling to Singapore and encountering competing notions of national identity.

“Cosmopolitan” is a quality that was introduced by poet-critic A. J. M. Smith to discussions of modern Canadian poetry and some of its poets in the 1940s, initially as a part of a debate about two competing styles of modern poetry in Canada.² Poets who he categorized as “cosmopolitan”—including P. K. Page, F. R. Scott, and Patrick Anderson—“made a heroic effort to transcend colonialism by entering into the universal, civilizing culture of ideas” (5). Smith emphasized the intellectualism of these writers, as well as their familiarity with modernist works from Anglo-American poets. The other style, which he dismissively called “native,” was viewed by Smith as implicitly inferior, derivative, and colonial. However, the narrative of opposition between nationalist and cosmopolitanist traditions was radically challenged, particularly by poets associated with the native tradition, and was subsequently revised.³ The nature of being “colonial” was hotly debated. On the one hand, poetry too invested in Canadian content, nature poetry, and realism was derided for being colonial, as in navel-gazing and uninteresting to international modern writing. On the other hand, poetry that drew too heavily on Anglo-American modernist influences was also derided for its own colonialism—being derivative and not focused enough on Canadian qualities.⁴ From the 1940s onward, cosmopolitanism and colonial identity have been entwined in the Canadian context; while both terms shift uneasily over time, the tension between them has remained central to Canadian modernist cosmopolitanism.

One of the central publications associated with this iteration of cosmopolitanism was the little magazine *Preview* (1942-1945), edited by Patrick Anderson. In addition to serving as the general editor, Anderson contributed poetry, journal entries, editor’s notes, short stories, reviews, and articles. Throughout *Preview*’s run, Anderson was its most frequent contributor, with forty poems, nine short stories, and five reviews and articles (Precosky). From this diverse body of work, several cosmopolitan themes emerge: ethics of war, alienation from political and social structures, desire for common values, and acknowledgement of individual and cultural difference. These themes are particularly evident in the magazine’s poetry. In the inaugural issue of *Preview*, for instance, such themes appear in several of Anderson’s poems. In the first, “New Dead,” the speaker reflects on the relationship between poetry and victims of war: “I think of those who falling between my words, / burn out unnoticed.”⁵ The speaker acknowledges his own distance from the atrocity of the unfolding war and sees a disjunction between the creation of a poem and the destruction of life. These actions

are counterposed, but they are also treated in relation. He compares death to the difficulty of a poem when he describes victims of war thus: “they are changed strangely by pain’s metaphors, / yet leave an unread book, who die for culture.” The speaker troubles the idea of dying for culture, but also indicates the social and cultural losses of war. Put differently, he reinforces the relationship between global cultures and politics, seeing them as two parts of the same whole. Cosmopolitanism in this poem manifests itself as a desire to twin politics and culture and show how the fate of one is enmeshed with the other.

In addition to bringing together world politics and culture, Anderson’s cosmopolitanism includes dense imagery and direct language—a cool self-awareness that blends subjective interpretation with rich intertextual references and intellectual difficulty in poems like “Capital Square,” also published in the inaugural issue of *Preview*. This poem emphasizes the danger and coldness of the built environment, exploring thematically the modern city as a symmetrical but abstract space that resists its inhabitants. The built environment is ominous and violent; the stone architecture is described as a “boxing brute,” the facades are “punishing,” and the statues keep “No upon their lips.” The images build on one another to recreate the dense, impenetrable walls described in the poem. It also uses the second person to develop the impact of the city on the individual. The stone coldness of the square’s statues allows “you [to] understand / you are a pigmy held in a stone hand. // No warmth is here, only an abstract good.” So, the speaker makes a connection between himself and his addressee. The speaker extends and projects his own reading and interpretation of the city to others, suggesting that the city is ominous and unforgiving to all. This is where cosmopolitanism meets modernism: the modernist concern with the representation of alienation in the face of change couples with the cosmopolitan desire to relate or share experiences between and across difference.

Though Smith initially framed Canadian cosmopolitanism in his discussion of modernist poetry, cosmopolitanism was also an integral part of Canadian modernist prose. What is interesting in this body of work—which shares the very same pages of *Preview* as the poetry—is the way that it engages with authority in modernist writing. In Anderson’s prose, the narrator is often highly self-aware, and yet is often extremely superficial.⁶ This heightened self-awareness of the role that the narrator plays in subjectively shaping and positing him- or herself in relation to the text counteracts the impersonal remove associated with an omniscient narrator. Thematized in modernist

writing, and in particular, travel writing, is a questioning self-awareness through an emphasis on self-reflective narration. Anderson carefully crafts artist personas that are sensitive, observant, and acutely aware of those around them. Don Precosky describes this persona as “a narrator who is intensely alive to even the most delicate sensations.” For example, in the short prose piece “Dramatic Monologue,” an artist-figure attempts to teach a boy about the power of metaphor but does not succeed, bringing about crisis; in “Remembering the Village,” a college-aged poet describes a friendly refuge offered by “Miss P.,” a woman whose “enthusiasm was almost over bright,” and whose poetry is “too sentimental” for his “dreadfully obscure” taste. Anderson’s narrators read other characters through their own perceptions, recording detailed aesthetic sketches of their behaviour and description.

Then again, Anderson tends to let his narrators dominate, and often underdevelops the other characters in his work, or allows secondary characters to stand as foil characters. For Precosky, “the narrator is more important to the stories than any action which takes place in them.” For example, in “The Americans,” Anderson’s narrator asserts his own cosmopolitanism by contrasting his behaviour at a summer hotel in Quebec with that of some American guests. In the story, the Americans are described as the core of the Canadian summer hotel industry, valued for their money and power. Their privilege gives them power, but does not endow them with a cosmopolitan sensibility. Indeed, the Americans are racist and quick to shame the narrator for his open-mindedness. They generalize and justify their mistreatment of others: “Then, as though from an infinite wisdom she were producing a beautiful ethical truth: ‘You know, you can’t change human nature. Why, there’ll always be wars. There’ll always be some people who are rich and enterprising and those who are no darn good at all. Of course there will!’” (10). The American characters’ speeches and displays of blatant racism and anti-Semitism throughout seem to illustrate the wrong way to interact on the world stage. In contrast, the narrator presents his own views humbly; he relies on negation to present Canadian attitudes toward class and racial difference as morally superior, determining that unlike the Americans, he and his wife Peggy “were quite objective” because “we based our opinions on what had been our experience” (10). Cosmopolitanism—here presented as informed politeness—contrasts starkly with the Americans’ aggression, rudeness, and bigotry.

Further, the closing lines of “The Americans” offer a hopeful demonstration of cosmopolitan ethics in action. The narrator celebrates the dual cultures of

Canada by taking on the language of the hotel operators. The story ends with a celebration of a return to proper cosmopolitan order. As the Americans leave, the narrator and his wife “were busy ordering breakfast from Rita—orange juice, fried eggs and coffee, in jubilant French” (11). The narrator’s final joyous act, speaking the language of his environment instead of insisting that the hotel operators conform to his language, speaks to simple and everyday ways of embracing cultural difference. Often, Anderson’s ethics are cosmopolitan and forward-looking—but his tendency to generalize and stereotype shows his limitations.

Preview lays important groundwork for Canadian cosmopolitanism, both as it has been understood collectively in Canadian literary studies and as it was practiced by Anderson specifically. In a retrospective piece on the magazine, Anderson makes his own summations of the ways cosmopolitan ethics manifested in *Preview*. He writes, “our subjects—the poor, the deprived, the young and uncertain, the decadent bourgeois, the members of minority groups, the conscripts—bulk larger than any question of formal aesthetics or even, indeed, of forging a Canadian literature” (“Introduction” iv). Thus, it is through the choice of subjects—primarily those without power—that he presents the heart of the magazine. Beyond this, he summarizes the interest with cosmopolitanism in *Preview* as being informed by the French-English dualism of Montreal: “I cannot but think that our proximity to the French kept our characteristic mixture of nationalism and internationalism alive. Certainly a Canada without its complementary culture was unthinkable” (v). The comparative nature of living and working in two languages and cultures is at the core of Canadian cosmopolitan thought: the tension and celebratory possibility of bilingualism and biculturalism encourage Anderson to write comparatively. However, this perspective becomes limiting when the comparisons are binaristic, or do not consider the power, privilege, and bias of the narrator doing the comparing.

In the relatively limited scope of the Montreal magazine, Anderson and his contemporaries practiced a modernist cosmopolitanism that largely left its colonial underpinnings unquestioned. The projects of both settler-colonialism and empire building were implicitly accepted. Thus, cosmopolitanism in the context of a literary magazine, circulated among peers in a small Montreal-based community with similar backgrounds in terms of education, class, and race, allowed its proponents to assume (however incorrectly) a likeness among their experiences that allowed for a particular construction of what is universal or shared among different people

and places. However, when Anderson created travel writing in the period following, his assumptions about commonality and universal attitudes became increasingly problematized. His critical reflections about such assumptions in his travel writing nuanced his articulation of cosmopolitan ideology for the better. Instead of treating cosmopolitanism as a singular set of shared global values, in his travel writing he recognized difference as a positive part of cultural exchange and mutual understanding.

Self-Representation and Narrative Authority as Cosmopolitan Engagement in *Snake Wine*

Moving across international borders, and in particular, from the settler colony of Canada to the colony of Singapore, brings into sharper focus Anderson's totalizing urges. Through travel, Anderson productively confronts his own prejudices and assumptions, even though he does not usually resolve them. Canadian modernist cosmopolitanism is tested against other, competing notions of how to live and define oneself. For Anderson, travelling to Singapore partially readjusts his literary persona and assumptions; but this new context also reveals how inextricably his cosmopolitan worldview is vested in colonial power. Turning to narrative voice in *Snake Wine* allows me to engage with Anderson's articulation of cosmopolitanism by exploring his treatment of collective identities, nation, and colonial privilege.

Snake Wine, published in England in 1955, is based on Anderson's journals from his two years working in Singapore as a lecturer at the newly formed University of Malaya from 1950-1952. The text, written from Anderson's perspective, narrates his observations about Singapore's culture, city life, academic structure, and political strife, with an emphasis on the way these things impact him. Anderson uses inconsistent self-representation in the novel to critically engage with the limitations of his own cosmopolitan vision. The work is a kind of modernist collage—bringing together parts of the travel experience without creating coherence or unity. The first third of the text is constructed as long, unaddressed personal letters, and the rest is written episodically, relaying key moments in his trip. The move from the unstructured personal letters to the more structured narrative anecdotes is abrupt and unexplained, and speaks to a blatant disregard for the conventions of the linear travelogue. Rather than follow a typical travel narrative plot structure, the text controls subjective experience through a carefully developed narratorial persona in a way that both illustrates the subjective nature of the account, and also subtly reveals the author's narrative control.

If we read the changes in tone from beginning to end as intentionally modernist, the structure of *Snake Wine* reverses expectations—fragmentation and stream of consciousness do not follow structure, but instead come first. The text draws attention to its own construction and composition; the changes in structure point to the degree of editing and manipulation of experience from the raw, more visceral journals to the more stylistically contained short story vignettes. The turn toward a more structured narrative pattern, perhaps, speaks to a reining in of authority from a text that is starting to get away from its author. The narrator's uneven presentation of authority, his blend of uncertainty and blunt assertiveness, reveal a subject attempting to reconceptualize his relationship to others while trying to critically engage with his own sense of self.

In the journal section of the text, Anderson's persona is quite self-indulgent.⁷ He is concerned with his self-perception and wants to appear as a comfortable and successful man to his fellow passengers on his voyage to Singapore. From the beginning, Anderson is focused on fashioning himself as cosmopolitan:

Two things give me the confidence to imagine that I am a man of the world and an experienced traveller: the phrases uncoiling inside my head and seeming more and more apt as drink succeeds drink; the timeless solitude in which, with no immediate preoccupations, I can flatter myself with the facts of my private existence until they acquire a beautiful if fatuous significance. (12)

Anderson reflects ironically on his own social anxieties to overcome the insecurity that underlies his most assertive statements. This initial frame for cosmopolitanism is shallow at best—well-travelled, worldly—and presented by a narrator experiencing imposter syndrome. When Anderson's narrator is most vulnerable, the colonial privilege he relies on for his cosmopolitan attitude is made most apparent. While anxious, Anderson also asserts a kind of exuberance. He expresses his brief biographical details:

How astonishing to be thirty-five years old! How extraordinary to be an adopted Canadian, especially when this involved a 'professorship,' however minor, at McGill University in Montreal! And how intoxicating this new freedom is, sailing away to take up a reasonably senior post in the English Department of the University of Malaya! (12)

The overly ebullient statements combined with the multiple exclamation points seem over-compensatory; he comes across as trying to earnestly perform the role of a cosmopolitan gentleman.⁸ Anderson is consciously aware of his inability to fully embrace displacement, and yet we see him attempting

to identify and perform a cosmopolitan identity to try to familiarize the foreign and construct a more certain and positive identity for himself. For Anderson, cosmopolitanism is presented as an eagerness for adventure, and a comfort with it, all expressed with self-assertion and authority.

In these early pages, Anderson's narrator seems caught up in the desire to *appear* cosmopolitan—he introduces himself with a list of his social capital, which specifically includes his chosen (thus “adopted”) citizenship as a Canadian. Anderson's nationality here is a marker of elitist cosmopolitanism; both his freedom of movement and his relatively straightforward immigration are rooted in his status as a subject of the British Empire moving through its colonies. Anderson treats his Canadianness as a kind of affectation, an almost aesthetic quality. Indeed, as Robert Druce describes in his short memoir of Anderson, Anderson's nationality “was a status in which he took great pride throughout all his remaining years of self-chosen exile from Canada” (243). Anderson uses his nationality as a marker of difference from his fellow British subjects in Singapore. By choosing to identify himself as Canadian (he became a Canadian citizen in 1945 and lived in Canada for ten years), Anderson conflates his cosmopolitan assertiveness with modernist aesthetics, relying on his colonial power while reorienting himself in empire as a different type of citizen. The social capital associated with cosmopolitan attitudes and ethics is part and parcel of Canadian modernist cosmopolitanism. It is a way of understanding and valuing knowledge and culture that is, in great part, colonial in its expression and attitude.

Anderson relies on colonial assumptions to frame his sense of the cosmopolitan, which reveals cosmopolitanism's complicity in asymmetrical power relations. His narrator explores the power he has gained as white settler-colonial subject in a colonized country, and does not question the colonial structures he encounters. He anticipates “the kind of life [he] can expect [in Singapore]” by daydreaming: “[*W*]hat sort of a servant shall I have? Shall I have a Malay, or an Indian, or a Chinese? And shall I be able, through him or her, to grapple with the country, understand it and love it? (Of course, romantically, I love it already)” (26, emphasis original). In his desire to really “understand” the country, Anderson is eager to use colonial relationships to help him. Embodied in his romanticization of the servant is an obvious Orientalist mindset—the East is both seductive and submissive to colonial power. The servant acts as a synecdoche for the country as a whole. Anderson's desire to “know” Singapore is undermined by his colonial desire not actually to acculturate, but instead to control and represent this new

space from his own authoritative position. Clearly, then, Anderson interprets the servant as a marker of cultural capital, as a “symbol” that is meant to help him develop his own subjective responses to the East as a modernist artist. He relies on tropes of modernist primitivism,⁹ and its link to the romantic past, to avoid directly confronting this reality.

Cosmopolitanism can also be read as a kind of cover for Anderson’s sexuality. Though Anderson was closeted at the time,¹⁰ his queer identity is given some expression via cosmopolitanism. Because he desires a romanticized, primitive subject, Anderson hires a young boy as his servant. He openly acknowledges his own paternalism and desire for control in his selection of fifteen-year-old Ah-Ting, “whose boyishness is not purely professional, who is in fact prodigiously small, young even to pathos and ferociously efficient” (42-43). Anderson’s many and lengthy descriptions of Ah-Ting are also grounded in eroticism. In a passage purportedly describing the control Ah-Ting has as holder of the household keys, Anderson turns abruptly to the sensual, as he notices:

[H]is brief shorts into which his smooth pale thigh disappeared only a few inches from my face, flesh at once taut, plump and reticent, so that it possessed its own locked-up look, for it neither varied in surface tone like a white man’s skin, nor did it secrete, as do the gleaming skins of Tamils and Malays, a deeper intensity of purple or a series of shifting yellows and mauves. (77)¹¹

Anderson’s voyeuristic description is sexualized and idealized. Ah-Ting’s body is aestheticized and Orientalized in order to allow Anderson to express desire that would otherwise be seen as deviant or pedophilic. The servant fulfills a number of representative roles for Anderson—colonial dominance, romantic primitivism, and acceptable homoerotic sensualism and desire.

The aestheticization and Orientalization of Ah-Ting are tactics used by the narrator to deny Ah-Ting, and the servant class more generally, status as fellow humans. Anderson fully recognizes this practice, excusing it as an “elaborate personal indulgence[.]” (202) in an ironic, self-reflexive passage:

I like people and things for the way they look. But liking them is dangerous, demanding contacts and action and leading often to disappointment, and so it seems to me that I tend to scurry back with my visual images to my cell And then, to spiritualize what is appropriated in this vivid but lonely fashion, I turn my experience into a symbol and, since symbols last when impressions fade and die, I approach the world again with a whole set of imaginative preconceptions. (202-03)

Anderson understands his appropriation of others for his visual pleasure as a modernist practice that makes his life more pleasurable and keeps him from

feelings of isolation and loneliness. In fact, this passage suggests that aesthetic symbols are preferable to real contact—reinforcing his notion that the superficial is easier to control and to enjoy than a sustained, mutual relationship.

Anderson's framing of the foreign as aesthetic symbols compromises his commitment to cosmopolitan ideals. As Holden rightly points out in his criticism of Anderson: "If this technique releases him from the prisonhouse of colonial discourse, it also effectively prevents any real knowledge of others, and ultimately produces a form of solipsism" (490). On the one hand, Holden suggests that aestheticization and an emphasis on the superficial can work to resist colonial writing techniques such as ethnography that interpret and pass judgment on what one sees. But, on the other hand, to avoid this knowing, Anderson retreats from it at all by withdrawing into himself. However, I argue this inward gaze can itself be productive. Modernism and cosmopolitanism do not work together to completely overcome the structures of knowledge produced by colonialism; rather, they are revealed to be dual agents, working alongside colonialism, all the while questioning it and criticizing its ethics. In my reading of *Snake Wine*, Anderson continues to cultivate a critical cosmopolitan consciousness and subsequently takes ethical responsibility through engaging in acts of critical self-reflection that resist colonial impulses.

Textual Resistance: An Alternative Response to Colonial Cosmopolitanism

A careful reading of resistance within *Snake Wine* suggests a more complex engagement with both cosmopolitanism and colonial bias than the narrator's initial elitist, Orientalized cosmopolitanism. While *Snake Wine* makes use of colonial privilege and modernist primitivism as strategies for interpreting Singapore, the text also engages more fully with the broader implications of Canadian modernism as an international project that reinforces colonialism. Anderson's narrator is critical of his own colonial presence, and the other characters in the text often act as anti-colonial agents who question the narrator's authority.

In Singapore, anti-colonial resistance, both violent and non-violent, forces Anderson's narrator to confront the markers of identity that have allowed him to freely travel and teach his cultural canon in a colonized classroom. Though *Snake Wine*'s journal entries assert Anderson's power, this power is resisted in several ways. Most notably, Ah-Ting's agency immediately questions the absolute representational power of Anderson's narrator. In small and large actions, Ah-Ting intentionally fails to adhere to Anderson's desires and expectations. For example, Ah-Ting refers to Anderson as "sir,"

which frustrates Anderson because it does not provoke the same pleasure “of the more romantic *Tuan* which the *amah* had always used” (43). As their working relationship develops, Anderson is less and less successful at asserting his will—Ah-Ting refuses to live at the house (45), is a poor pupil of English (86-87), and chooses when the house will be locked and when dinner will be served even if Anderson expressly states otherwise (88). At the same time, Anderson’s students radicalize at the university, and he finds himself sympathetic to their cause; he visits student detainees from his modern poetry group, including future lawyer and activist James Puthuchery (243). Even other colonial agents actively question Anderson’s stance. One colleague directly criticizes Anderson, saying, “It is not wholly impossible . . . that Singapore was produced for a different purpose than the satisfaction of your romantic ego” (170). Anderson presents characters who question the legitimacy of colonial ideologies. The resistance of Ah-Ting and other Singaporeans suggests that, even if incompletely, *Snake Wine* presents colonized individuals with agency and some power to resist colonialism.

Though Anderson’s narrator frequently chooses escapism and superficiality, the political upheaval in the city requires that he engage indirectly with anti-colonial sentiments and Singapore’s ensuing political unrest. Far from being a place that exists to fulfill Anderson’s desires, *Snake Wine*’s Singapore prompts Anderson to become more politically aware. Anti-colonial events demand a more thoughtful engagement with cosmopolitan difference. For example, during a night out drinking, Anderson’s narrator is caught up in the Maria Hertogh riots.¹² Having provided the reader with almost no political context for Singapore, the narrator starts a new entry: “It’s odd to think that three days ago I came quite near to being killed” (58). As part of a violent response to anti-Muslim sentiment amongst Anglo elites, Anderson was physically threatened. After being trapped in the bathroom of an expatriate bar, he was pushed out the back door by the bar’s colonized owner just as a busload of rioters arrived to hunt for Europeans. He was followed up the street, and only lost his pursuers due to the darkness of the alleyway. This anti-colonial encounter realigns Anderson’s privilege, and causes him to assess his feelings of natural superiority. He reflects, “what was most frightening about it was that it tapped hidden reservoirs of hatred toward the Europeans . . . And of course my conventionally romantic attitude toward the Malays has suffered quite a set back” (67). While this statement still implies a strong colonial bias, the event will ultimately lead Anderson to reflect on colonial privilege and his own tendency to use romantic stereotypes.

The riots are a turning point in the text; after this recounting, the narrative quickly shifts to the self-contained episodes that can be seen to question or underline the narratorial objectivity and confident articulation of colonial privilege. Further, the narrator's behaviour is also impacted by this change, as he employs new strategies for connecting with his place; he moves to the outskirts of the jungle, seeks out the company of the locals, and begins to engage with his students more personally, encouraging their attempts at modern poetry and creative writing. He retreats from participation in university society parties, and attempts to disappear into what he determines to be a more "authentic" Singaporean lifestyle, explaining that he desired to "plunge in deeper, not merely to observe but to become personally involved" (106). While this could be read as an act of self-preservation following the riots, Anderson's actions can also be read as a partial ideological realignment. Anderson's confrontation with anti-colonialism reveals the powerful agency of the Other as his colonial privileges are threatened at both a real and a symbolic level.

Later in the text, Anderson productively grapples with the implications of his colonial identity. His roles as an educator and settler-colonial implicate him in the social structures he attempts to escape; these identity markers firmly entrench him within the colonial project. In a self-reflexive passage, he remarks:

It is very difficult in a colony to be just an individual—you are always an individual-minus, a representative of something no longer very clear or very confident . . . while you are out on your own, and probably disclaiming your privileges as a European, you move under the glamorous spotlight given to you by your colour. Life with your fellow white men is dull; life with the natives too mysterious and flattering to be quite secure. Nobody likes the British as a ruling class any more, except perhaps for some hero-worshipping Malays—least of all the British themselves. (156)

Here, Anderson's narrator confronts the ways he must negotiate his privilege and his marked body as he moves through the various social spaces of Singapore. He wants neither the responsibility nor the burden of guilt that he acknowledges is associated with his colonial position. These moments of critical self-reflection are as integral to the text as Anderson's superficial readings; his experiences in Singapore provoke a crisis of identity and force him to reflect on his complicity in Empire.

Furthermore, Anderson's narrator openly criticizes colonial servants in his chapter "Profile of a City," where he describes Singapore as beyond his grasp and encapsulates the ways in which the city is on the verge of change and redefinition. He expresses the loneliness and isolation of the settler-colonial,

coming to realize “we’re all Colonial servants, all insuperably white and money-making and child-breeding and ultimately irrelevant” (163). Further, he begins to break down the concept of the cosmopolitan as inherently worldly:

People who have never lived anywhere more glamorous than Surbiton, never been abroad, certainly never embraced the cosmopolitanism of an Arnold or T. S. Eliot, suddenly find themselves regarded as *Europeans*, for this is the official recognition of anyone with white skin; your Identity Card declares it to be your ‘race’. Even Empire Builders prefer not to call themselves British. (158)

Here, Anderson’s narrator acknowledges that much of the privilege he associates with whiteness is unearned and undeserved. Likewise, the narrator represents Singapore as indicative of a larger experience of cosmopolitan isolation: “Singapore is a city where nobody really belongs, where no culture is indigenous, no memory authoritative, no attitude other than immature” (153-54). Though this is a generalization, it brings up a central truth for Anderson: his position as a settler-colonial keeps him from knowledge, experience, and belonging, even though he remains in a position of power.

In these reflections, once more, Singapore resists Anderson’s attempts to control it and make it his own. He states: “You can’t become a functioning member of the community, but you can imagine yourself *hiding* in its attractive foreignness, *intuitively understanding* the primitiveness or innocence or vitality of which you feel it to be the expression, and *drowning* in an atmosphere where aesthetic stimulation suggests deep significance” (198, emphasis original). The flourish of italics emphasizes that Anderson is aware of the effects of his own aestheticization. He remains lost in aesthetic stimulation, not in this real place, which he determines is not fully accessible to him because of his colonial identity.

The various representational practices Anderson adopts in *Snake Wine* serve as an important contact zone between two vastly different responses to modernity: colonial and anti-colonial cosmopolitanism. At the margins of this text, anti-colonial sentiment colours Anderson’s narration, and ultimately leaves him unsatisfied with his experience. Such reflexive tensions do not extend to an assessment of what it means to be a settler-colonial in Canada, however; it is only in Singapore that Anderson sees himself as a colonial agent. Although Anderson does not overcome his urge toward modernist primitivism and romanticized Orientalism in *Snake Wine*, the book’s structure and its rendition of anti-colonial resistance undermine the narrator’s authority and criticize his colonial privilege in significant ways.

Patrick Anderson's work highlights the central tension between colonialism and cosmopolitanism in modernist travel writing, revealing the complicity of the two concepts. As Holden asserts, "Anderson's predicament makes us reconsider contemporary valorizations of modernism as political practice and the limits of literary cosmopolitanism" (491). Cosmopolitanism in and of itself is not inherently good; good cosmopolitanism is inherently critical and relational. So, modernist cosmopolitanism should be read as a complex political-aesthetic project that sometimes attempts to understand and make sense of difference using observation and experience to draw connections between people across geographic and colonial boundaries. Via travel writing, modernist cosmopolitanism is able to realize more of its vision. Intercultural contact, resistance, and exposure to decolonization are shown to improve and challenge cosmopolitan ethics in a work like *Snake Wine*. Patrick Anderson's travel writing exemplifies Canadian modernist cosmopolitanism, and elucidates the need for a more concerted study of travel writing and its contribution to the complexities of modernist cosmopolitanism.

NOTES

- 1 See especially Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes*.
- 2 See *The Book of Canadian Poetry* (Smith 1943) and its revised introductions and reframing of the concept of cosmopolitanism in 1948 and 1957.
- 3 The best-known criticism of the division came from John Sutherland's introduction to *Other Canadians*. In the context of Canadian modernism criticism, see Philip Kokotailo and Anouk Lang. For more on how these debates fundamentally affect Canadian literary studies, see Cynthia Sugars. For discussion about the codependency of cosmopolitanism and nationalism in Anglo-American modernism, see Bridget Chalk and Jessica Berman. In broader cosmopolitan studies, see especially Cyrus R. K. Patell.
- 4 For a summary of the arguments and texts of this debate, see Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski.
- 5 There are no page numbers for the first seven issues of *Preview*.
- 6 For Stacy Burton, modernist travel writers question "the presumption of narrative authority" (30). She suggests, quoting from Pericles Lewis, that modernists "transform 'the individual protagonist into the narrator (or to look at it another way . . . the narrator into a character)'" (30-31).
- 7 Anderson's self-focus is consistent with the time period. Brian Trehearne remarks that Canadian modernist writing in the 1950s underwent an "inward turn," and began to engage more strongly with "the right to individual consciousness and individual liberties" (*Canadian Poetry* 440). He notes that "this inward turn was not a retreat so much as a determination to rediscover the grounds and stability of individual consciousness and belief" (440).
- 8 These assertive exclamations resonate with, and possibly allude to, Joseph Conrad's short story "Youth," where a similarly naive and uncertain man named Marlow travels east to

- begin his first adult job. Like Anderson, Marlow exudes “Fancy! Second mate for the first time—a really responsible officer! I wouldn’t have thrown up my billet for a fortune!” (4). It also features a shifting narratorial stance and draws attention to the discrepancy between the younger, more romantic Marlow and the comparatively crusty and ironic older Marlow.
- 9 Primitivism offers modernist authors “metaphorical escapes from modernity” (Rossetti 124). The use of this trope, and in turn, “primitive” non-Western subject matter in one’s art, helped to remove the artist from their own socio-political conditions.
 - 10 See especially Justin D. Edwards, Robert K. Martin, and Brian Trehearne.
 - 11 This attentively described homoerotic male body has strong resonances with Anderson’s *Preview* poem “The Drinker” that is used as the basis for John Sutherland’s accusation of homosexuality (again see Edwards and Martin). The poem implicitly describes an act of fellatio while explicitly describing the body of a worker drinking in order to connect everyday actions with homosexual desire.
 - 12 On December 11, 1950, a Singapore court ruled that a child adopted and raised by Muslim parents should be returned to her Dutch Catholic biological parents after only minutes of deliberation. Given that the court was part of the colonial legal system of Singapore, the Muslim parents determined (rightly) that the legal system was biased against them, which resulted in a riot targeted at Europeans and Christians. Over three days, eighteen people were killed, including seven Europeans and Eurasians, and 173 were injured. Two buildings were burnt to the ground and 119 vehicles were damaged. The death toll for these riots was the highest of any violent incident during Britain’s rule in Singapore. See especially Syed Aljunied and Edwin Lee.

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