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An Outpost of Modernism: The Diplomatic Design of *Cosmopolis*

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Abstract

Although certain works published in the fin-de-siècle journal *Cosmopolis: An International Review* (1896–8) would have a lasting impact on twentieth-century literature, the principles behind its design have escaped critical attention. This article posits that *Cosmopolis* anticipated a form of modernism that Walter Benjamin would later conceptualise in his ‘Critique of Violence’ (1921) and ‘The Task of the Translator’ (1923). The interplay between Benjamin’s two essays suggests that translation allows one to reach a nonviolent resolution of conflict through language: a translation’s mediation between an original work and pure language presents a nonviolent form of coexistence. The editors and writers of *Cosmopolis* had already put this idea into practice: a significant number of contributors wrote in a language that was not their own, while those who did write in their own language addressed a non-native audience. The geopolitical implications of this multilingual approach come to the fore most emphatically in a case of pseudo-translation that deals with the case of Alsace-Lorraine. More subtly, the periodical creates echoes and reverberations between articles on international politics and works of literature. Through these translational practices, *Cosmopolis* was designed to foster a ‘diplomatic’ form of cosmopolitanism, a fact highlighted by the diplomatic credentials of a number of contributors, including the main editor, and thematised in short stories by Joseph Conrad and Henry James.

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The Diplomatic Design of Cosmopolis

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M. de Norpois was a man of few words, not only by virtue of the diplomatist's habits of prudence and reserve, but also because words have a greater worth [*ils ont plus de prix*], and more subtle shades of meaning, for men whose efforts over a decade to bring together two countries may amount [*se résumant, se traduisent*] to a single adjective in a speech or a protocol, but in which, unremarkable though it may appear [*banal en apparence*], they can read volumes [*ils voient tout un monde*].

– Proust, *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower* 8; *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, 428

In his description of M. de Norpois in the second volume of *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1919), Marcel Proust marks the difference between the practice of diplomacy and the art of literature by caricaturing the former as ridden by clichés and commonplaces. Few readers, indeed, would fault the narrator for being stingy with his words. Like many homodiegetic narrators, however, he reveals as much about himself as about the subjects he describes. The object of his satire, the reserve of diplomatic language, may in fact be closer to his own worldview than he finds comfortable. What is the madeleine dipped in tea, after all, but a thing banal in appearance, yet resonant with a whole world of meaning, *où ils voient tout un monde*? In other modernist novels, too, diplomacy figures as a mirror image for the work's aesthetic. The pivotal moment in Virginia Woolf's fictional biography *Orlando* (1928), a more obviously satirical work, occurs when King Charles II appoints Orlando as Ambassador Extraordinary to Constantinople. Serving in this capacity, Orlando falls into a trance and wakes up as a woman. This enigmatic and crucial event cannot be detailed, because the diplomatic record is incomplete:

But the revolution which broke out during [Orlando's] period of office, and the fire which followed, have so damaged or destroyed all those papers from which any trustworthy record could be drawn, that what we can give is lamentably incomplete. Often the paper was scorched a deep brown in the middle of the most important sentence. Just when we thought to elucidate a secret that has puzzled historians for a hundred years, there was a hole in the manuscript big enough to put your finger through. We have done our best to piece out a meagre summary from the charred fragments that remain; but often it has been necessary to speculate, to surmise, and even to use the imagination. (Woolf 72)

Woolf's characterisation of the diplomatic record as a fragment tallies neatly with the fragmentary aesthetic of her own writing and,

indeed, of modernism more generally. Dedicated to and inspired by Vita Sackville-West, *Orlando* also alerts us to the significance of another minor modernist, Sackville-West's husband, Harold Nicolson, who combined a career in foreign affairs with work as a literary critic and biographer. These two paths were to some extent mutually constitutive: he also tackled diplomatic topics in his more overtly literary works, such as *Byron: The Last Journey* (1924), his study of the final months of Lord Byron's life, leading up to his death in the fight for Greek independence. Within this constellation, one might also consider how Vernon Lee's background in aestheticism shaped the pacifist rhetoric of the pamphlets and war drama she turned to in her later years (see Pulham).

Modernist writers, then, seem to have been in various ways intrigued by the subject of diplomacy. This productive interchange is worthy of further examination, as it sheds new light on more familiar aspects of modernism, such as T. S. Eliot's interest in Charles Baudelaire's lyrics or Woolf's fascination with the psychological method of Anton Chekhov (see Lyon). This article suggests that their international outlook had a precursor in the political and the aesthetic principles that underpinned *Cosmopolis: An International Review*, a late nineteenth-century journal, which appeared monthly from January 1896 to November 1898 (see de Saint Victor). *Cosmopolis* did live up to its subtitle: the journal was published in three metropolises (London, Paris, Berlin) and featured contributions in three languages (English, French, and German, with a Russian supplement towards the end). If *Cosmopolis* is remembered today, it is for the proto-modernist texts that appeared in its pages, of which Mallarmé's '*Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*' ['A Roll of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance'] is arguably the most significant instance. As such, *Cosmopolis* may be said to have played a key part in unlocking the potential of modernism: '*Un coup de dés*', after all, crystallised 'a negative poetics which would continue to reverberate in the work of writers as diverse as Valéry, Ungaretti, Reverdy, Kafka and Beckett' (Nicholls 41). It would be wrong to present '*Un coup de dés*', however, as representative of the tone and subject matter of *Cosmopolis*. The editorial footnote preceding Mallarmé's poem suggests that the journal's aesthetic predilections were in fact perceived as rather conservative:

Desiring to be as eclectic in literature as in politics [*aussi éclectique en littérature qu'en politique*] and to defend itself against the reproach of not disregarding the new school of French poetry, the editors of COSMOPOLIS offer its readers an unpublished poem by Stéphane Mallarmé, the undisputed master of symbolist poetry in France. (6.17: 417)¹

The Diplomatic Design of Cosmopolis

The role played by *Cosmopolis* in the transition from nineteenth-century symbolism to twentieth-century modernism was thus not the result of an intentional advocacy of a new aesthetic, but the outcome of the editors' intention to mediate between different art movements. At the same time, this intention was combined with the aim of facilitating exchange between different cultures. Indeed, the journal also featured regular contributions on the European political scene which, at the turn of the century, was becoming increasingly volatile. Mallarmé's poem was preceded by a short historical tale by Anatole France regarding 'La Muiron', the frigate that ferried Napoléon back to France after his defeat at the Battle of the Nile, and a political contribution, by Henry Norman, on unrest brewing in the Balkans because of the Great Powers' inability to challenge Turkey. The juxtaposition of Norman's article and France's short story suggests that history is about to repeat itself, while the juxtaposition of France's story and Mallarmé's poem (in which the image of a shipwreck is paramount) hints at the earth-shattering effect that such a replay would have on European civilisation. By creating a space in which there is room for negotiations such as these, *Cosmopolis* encouraged readers to speculate, surmise, and use the imagination. It is through the creation of this diplomatic aesthetic, I argue, that this late-Victorian journal influenced the art of writers such as Proust and Woolf, and paved the way for transnational exchanges in modernist periodicals such as *Commerce* (1924–32).

This suggestion may complement Tanya Agathocleous's claim that *Cosmopolis*'s unique place in the history of nineteenth-century periodicals rests on the fact that it combined two forms of cosmopolitanism.² One set of Victorian journals brandishing 'cosmopolitan' in their titles, she argues, aimed to be a neutral zone for the exercise of reason, thus fostering a notion of cosmopolitanism 'as a critical norm constituted through a disinterested stance and multi-faceted dialogue' (Agathocleous 55). These journals harked back to the enlightened, Kantian notion of universal peace and justice. Another set of journals, in contrast, associated cosmopolitanism with 'the circulation of information and finance', shaping a notion of cosmopolitanism as 'a mode of consumption and a disparate set of expatriate lifestyles held together by a dense network of imperialist and capitalist forces' (Agathocleous 54, 56). Nineteenth-century periodicals thus suggest that the notion of cosmopolitanism covers a split between idealism and materialism. *Cosmopolis* attempted to strike a balance between these two poles: 'Unlike the "neutral" periodicals, *Cosmopolis* embraced and made manifest its specific cultural locations; unlike the "network" ones, it associated cosmopolitanism predominantly with critical dialogue'

(Agathocleous 54). As a result, the journal created a new form, enacting ‘an early version of what Bruce Robbins calls “situated cosmopolitanism”’: a practice that self-consciously acknowledges its own embeddedness in language, culture, and nation while nonetheless exhibiting a “genuine striving toward common norms and mutual translatability” (Agathocleous 62; Robbins 13). Agathocleous focuses on the English texts in the journal and does not elaborate on Robbins’s notion of translatability, unfortunately, even though this notion can illuminate some of the journal’s peculiarities that have escaped critical notice. A closer attention to the operations of translation within the pages of the journal and to the interaction between different languages reveals, I believe, that the journal’s advocacy of ‘situated cosmopolitanism’ was informed by its diplomatic design.

To theorise the relation between translation and diplomacy, it is helpful to situate Walter Benjamin’s ‘Critique of Violence’ (*Zur Kritik der Gewalt*, 1921) against his more famous essay on ‘The Task of the Translator’ (*Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*, 1923), the preface to his translations of Charles Baudelaire’s *Tableaux parisiens*. The chemistry between Benjamin’s two texts allows us to appreciate the political function of the journal’s interlinguistic dimensions more fully, and thus to conceptualise its cosmopolitan characteristics more precisely. Conceived during the autumn of 1920, these two essays were written as Benjamin was attempting to integrate his longstanding interest in the philosophy of language with his more recent investigations into political theory, sparked by reading the work of Georges Sorel. Carlo Salzani has noted and explored how both essays revolve around the notion of purity, which derives from Benjamin’s engagements with Kantian transcendental criticism and with the Kantian conceptualisation of the moral act in particular. In the ‘Critique of Violence’, the notion of purity is apparent in Benjamin’s concern with divine violence, which differs from mythic violence as exercised by the law in that it ‘only expiates’ and is ‘lethal without spilling blood’ (Benjamin, ‘Critique’ 249–50). A strike, for example, can be an instance of pure violence since it opposes authority without positing a new foundation. In ‘The Task of the Translator’, this Kantian dimension is apparent in the concept of pure language, which Benjamin defines as the ‘suprahistorical kinship of languages rest[ing] in the intention underlying each language as a whole – an intention, however, which no single language can attain by itself but which is realised only by the totality of their intentions supplementing each other’ (Benjamin, ‘Task’ 74). These two notions, pure violence and pure language, share what is often referred to as Benjamin’s messianism: they

refer to a future in which acts or words are no longer instrumental or subjective.

There is another way in which the two essays are related, I would argue. A fairly standard reading of the 'Critique' is based on the fact that Benjamin uses the idea of divine violence to deconstruct the opposition between means and ends, the two cornerstones of legal philosophy. In an aside, before Benjamin turns to divine violence, he also suggests what a nonviolent way of relating to one another would look like. Interestingly, Benjamin locates the potential of this nonviolence in pure language, which suggests that the affinity between pure violence and pure language is perhaps not as neat as Salzani suggests:

Is any nonviolent resolution [*gewaltlose Beilegung*] of conflict possible? Without doubt. The relationships of private persons are full of examples of this. Nonviolent agreement is possible wherever a civilised outlook allows the use of unalloyed means of agreement [*wo die Kultur des Herzens den Menschen reine Mittel der Übereinkunft an die Hand gegeben hat*]. Legal and illegal means of every kind that are all the same violent may be confronted with nonviolent ones as unalloyed means. Courtesy, sympathy, peaceableness, trust, and whatever else might here be mentioned, are their subjective preconditions. Their objective manifestation, however, is determined by the law (whose enormous scope cannot be discussed here) that says unalloyed means are never those of direct solutions but always those of indirect solutions.

At this point in his aside, Benjamin turns to language as an example of such an indirect solution:

For this reason technique in the broadest sense of the word is their most particular area. Its profoundest example is perhaps the conference, considered as a technique of civil agreement [*Ihr tiefgreifendstes Beispiel ist vielleicht die Unterredung als eine Technik ziviler Übereinkunft betrachtet*]. For in it not only is nonviolent agreement possible, but also the exclusion of violence in principle is quite explicitly demonstrable by one significant factor: there is no sanction for lying. Probably no legislation on earth originally stipulated such a sanction. This makes clear that there is a sphere of human agreement that is nonviolent [*gewaltlose*] to the extent that it is wholly inaccessible to violence: the proper sphere of 'understanding', language. (Benjamin, 'Critique' 244; '*Kritik*' 191–2)

Language, as such, is a pure kind of means, *ein reines Mittel*. It is the condition of possibility for the concept of the conference (*Unterredung*), a concept that is relevant for the practice of diplomacy. As Benjamin indicates, this technical, diplomatic, possibly mendacious use of language does not do away with legal violence, because it is still a

means. Divine violence, in contrast, 'could be either the justified or the unjustified means to [just] ends but [is] not related to them as means at all but in some different way' ('Critique' 247). As a means or *Mittel*, language is still related to the law, pure though it may be. In other words, Benjamin suggests that language has the ability to create a space in which one can operate outside the law, but this nevertheless presupposes that the law is in force. As a result, pure language does not do away with legal violence in the way that divine violence is supposed to.

This passage from the 'Critique' is closely interwoven with 'The Task of the Translator' which is, in a certain way, an exaggeration of the adage that a translator is a traitor.³ Indeed, the concept of pure language that Benjamin puts forward in this essay has more in common with the potentially mendacious concept of '*Unterredung*' than with the concept of divine violence. Provocatively, Benjamin does not take the faithfulness of a translation as his point of departure. Rather, a translation will show that there is an element in language which cannot be communicated, but which is nevertheless essential. The translator's task, then, is to bring the original closer to this element. In Benjamin's words: 'The task of the translator consists in finding that intended effect upon the language into which he is translating which produces in it the echo of the original [...] The intention of the poet is spontaneous, primary, graphic; that of the translator is derivative, ultimate, ideational. For the great motif of integrating many tongues into one true language is at work' ('Task' 259). If this task seems utopian, it is also fundamentally ironic. Even though the translation brings the original closer to its intention, to pure language, by fixing it in space and time it loses the original's translatability: 'Translations, on the other hand, prove to be untranslatable not because of any inherent difficulty, but because of the looseness with which meaning attaches to them [*Übersetzungen dagegen erweisen sich unübersetzbar nicht wegen der Schwere, sondern wegen der allzu großen Flüchtigkeit, mit welcher der Sinn an ihnen haftet*]' ('Task' 262; '*Aufgabe*' 20). This predicament makes the language of translations akin to the technical language of the conferences that Benjamin describes in the 'Critique of Violence', which are not subject to any sanction for lying. A translation's mediation between original and 'pure language', then, presents the reader with the model of a nonviolent form of coexistence.

The nonviolent resolution of conflict through language that Benjamin describes in these two essays is put into practice in *Cosmopolis*. *Cosmopolis* places languages next to one another without explicitly creating continuity through summaries, abstracts, or editorial interventions, thus confronting the cosmopolitan reader with broken fragments that allow only glimpses of the union that they could have

formed. Chronologically, of course, this argument should be constructed differently: it would be more sensible to argue that this journal, embedded in the fin de siècle, provided the material to which Benjamin, writing in the aftermath of the first World War, was responding. And it is certainly significant that the journal contained contributions which made a lasting impression on Benjamin, such as Mallarmé's '*Un coup de dés*'. In other words, it might seem to make more sense to suggest that Benjamin was continuing the kind of discourse found in the pages of *Cosmopolis*. It is just as instructive to look at this relationship the other way around, though: Benjamin's theories about the nonviolent resolution of conflict through language can illuminate the diplomatic design of *Cosmopolis*.

Cosmopolis relied on translation far more than is at first noticeable. Take 'J. Gennadius', one of the journal's more elusive contributors, who wrote an article on international arbitrage in English. There can be little doubt that this is actually Ioánnis Gennádios (1844–1932), a Greek diplomat and bibliophile, who translated works such as Demétrios Vikélas's *Loukis Laras: Reminiscences of a Chiote Merchant during the War of Independence* (London: Macmillan, 1881) into English. Interestingly, Vikélas was a translator himself (as well as the first president of the International Olympic Committee). Gennádios was one of many contributors writing in languages that were not their own: among these are Maarten Maartens and Joseph Conrad, whose contributions are written in English, Georg Brandes and Lev Tolstoy, who wrote in French, and Mór Jókai also known as Maurus Jokai, who published in German, to name but a few. In addition to the presence and work of translators, there are articles on translation itself, such as 'Ferdinand Freiligrath as Translator', written by his daughter Kate, which opens modestly, though it does not continue in the same vein: 'It has sometimes been questioned whether one great poet can be translated by another great poet as well, perhaps, as by one of less originality, and the balance has generally leaned to the latter opinion' (11.31: 44–57). Even contributors writing in their native language seem to have fashioned themselves as translators in the sense that they were addressing a wider, 'European' audience. Especially revealing in this regard is how in the first issue one of the regular contributors, Emile Faguet, describes his role:

I do not promise to tell the truth here, not having been accustomed to say anything else [*je ne promets pas de dire ici la vérité, n'ayant pas accoutumé de dire autre chose*]; nor will I do everything completely independently, not being habituated to do otherwise. But I will be truthful here – how to put it? – with a little more precision than anywhere else [*en peu plus de précision*

que nulle part ailleurs]. I will not forget that I am speaking beyond the frontier of my country and that, by that sole fact, I am bound to a more strict and literal definition [*plus littérale définition*] of things. (1:184)

Faguet says he will try to represent his country's culture on the international stage, while hosting representatives of other countries. It is interesting to note that addressing his neighbours allows him, paradoxically, to be truthful and more precise. This implies that there are different levels of truth, which in turn qualifies his statement that he promises to tell the truth because he does not know how to lie.

The political and diplomatic implications of translation in *Cosmopolis* are highlighted in '*Une Voix d'Alsace*', subtitled '*Audiatum et altera pars*', and written by one 'Ignotissimus'. This anonymous author is writing against Ignotus, the regular contributor on German affairs. Ignotissimus takes issue with Ignotus's claim in an earlier issue that the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine was justified on ethnic grounds. Rather, he suggests, the people of the region should be allowed to choose for themselves – to be heard, in fact, rather than be used as pawns. Just as interesting as this message is the editorial footnote which precedes it:

The article by 'Ignotissimus' was sent to us from Strasburg in German, the author desiring to be read by the same public that 'Ignotus' addresses himself to. But major considerations have made us ask him to write his study in French [*des considérations majeures nous ont obligé à le prier de récrire son étude en français*] and it is this text which we are publishing. (2.5: 451)

What would be the '*considerations majeures*' that would have prompted the redaction to ask the author to translate his essay? The article's content may be polemic, but it is not incendiary. The mystery that this presents is heightened by the author's anonymity. In a copy of the journal at the *Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire de Strasbourg*, the author is identified as Gaston Moch, a pacifist writer not from Alsace-Lorraine, who was an early supporter of Esperanto (Schroda 430). This raises the possibility that the footnote was not so much an editorial insertion as an authorial ploy: it suggests that it is by occupying a position in between languages that this conflict can be resolved. The fact that the footnote is a lie is consistent with this endeavour.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that at issue here is the question of Alsace-Lorraine, the territory which was annexed by Germany after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, and which was caught, in more than one way, between Germany and France. This question was one of the many geopolitical disputes that fostered ill feeling between these two nations

in the decades leading up to the First World War. Interestingly, the question of Alsace-Lorraine recurred in the journal's pages. It had already been raised in the very first issue, the second article of which was an essay by the Liberal politician Charles Dilke on the origins of the war (1: 21–40). It is the Austrian playwright and journalist Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn, writing under the pseudonym 'Ignotus', who addresses it most frequently (1.2, 2.4, 2.6, 4.10, 4.11, 5.15, 8.22, 9.24, 11.31). The fact that Müller-Guttenbrunn uses a pseudonym has not been remarked upon, but it is slightly sinister in a journal that used signed contributions.⁴ The other writer who addresses the issue more than once, apart from Dilke, is Francis de Pressensé, the regular contributor on French politics. The question of Alsace-Lorraine thus reveals that within the pages of this journal there is an ongoing dialogue – a multilateral conference, as it were, or at the very least some kind of *Unterredung*. Perhaps it is also not a coincidence that in Proust's novel M. de Norpois is rumoured to have cut his teeth in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870.

The biographical background of political contributors reinforces the impression that *Cosmopolis* sought to provide a diplomatic platform. Although Müller-Guttenbrunn's activities centred on the national level (he was the figurehead of a minority, the *Donauschwaben*), the other two regular contributors on political affairs had diplomatic careers. Before turning to journalism and politics, Pressensé joined missions at Constantinople and Washington; his advocacy of Dreyfus and his ardent involvement in the *Ligue des droits de l'homme* conjure up the more idealistic connotations of cosmopolitanism. Henry Norman's cosmopolitanism, in contrast, seems much more materialistic, although there is a diplomatic side to it as well: an English journalist who made his mark with successful travel books about Japan and the Far East, his scoops included 'the revelations on the truth behind the Dreyfus affair and a border clash between Venezuela and British Guiana, averting a serious rupture in American-British relations in the latter case' (French n.pag.). These three men's quasi-diplomatic role functions as the backbone of *Cosmopolis*. They are the only ones to have published thirty or more articles, in which regard they are followed by a large margin by the regular contributors on English, French, and German literature, who wrote between fourteen and twenty pieces: Andrew Lang, Emile Faguet, and Anton Bettelheim.⁵ The mediating task performed by these regular contributors is reinforced by the presence of articles by actual diplomats such as Max von Brandt (Maximilian August Scipio von Brandt), who was instrumental in the opening of Japan to the West. In addition to acting as a diplomatic organ, *Cosmopolis* also reflects on

diplomatic theory. In the journal's fifth issue, Frederick Greenwood, former editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, defends the traditional idea of the balance of power as a means of preventing war (2.5: 346–60). This statement can be read as a reply to an article in the journal's second issue, where there is a short letter by the famous French philosopher and politician Jules Simon on the principle of arbitration, according to which conflicts between countries are mediated through a third, neutral arbiter (1.2: 444–6). Simon lauds this principle and sees *Cosmopolis* as acting in its spirit. It is in this issue that we also find the more technical contribution on the same subject by the aforementioned Gennádios.

A final tangible sign of the journal's diplomatic credentials can be glimpsed in the identity of its mysterious editor, Fernand Ortmans. Judging by the list of contributors to *Cosmopolis*, one would think that Ortmans was at the heart of the European intellectual elite of his time. It is therefore surprising that so little is known about him (Schroda 419). A brief look at the *Dictionnaire national des contemporains* (1899–1919) tells us that Ortmans was a man of letters and a historiographer, born of French parents at Brussels on 9 May 1861, who made his mark as a journalist and art critic (Curinier 131). A notice in *The New York Times* of 8 October 1900, furthermore, reveals that at one point he was to be married to a Mrs P. F. Baring, a widow whose first husband was an English banker. The description given in this announcement is more intimate:

Baron de Senechal is a bachelor, thirty-nine years old, and comes of an ancient French house. His father was Minister to Japan, and the present Baron resided in that country for several years. He has in fact spent most of his life in travel and has contributed stories of travel to many French periodicals. He is a linguist of note and a member of all the prominent politico-literary clubs of London and Paris. (7)

In another notice printed two days later, we learn that the announcement of this marriage 'created something of a sensation' at the Calumet Club, where Ortmans had been staying as a guest: Ortmans 'was incensed beyond measure at the announcement and denied it in vigorous language' (7). The fact that the notice concludes with the damaging revelation that Mrs Baring 'was known for a time as Mrs Blackmar' (7), means that the description of Ortmans as 'Baron de Senechal' should be taken with a grain of salt. The presence of Norman and von Brandt in the pages of *Cosmopolis* suggests, however, that it is not too far-fetched to accept that Ortmans had an interest and a past in Japan, possibly as part of a diplomatic upbringing. Although the details of this description are difficult to verify as much as his marital fate remains unknown, what is clear is that Ortmans had the makings of a

diplomat, but chose to exercise his talents elsewhere: the arts. As Carol de Saint Victor notes (88), one of the few other traces one finds of his existence is his contribution of an index to the French translation of Gustav Friedrich Hertzberg's *Die Geschichte Griechenlands unter der Herrschaft der Römer* (1866–8).

The more important point to be gleaned from Ortmans's biography is that literature has an equal share in the review. The diplomatic discourse as I have just sketched it is in fact interwoven with novellas, short stories, and literary criticism, and to a lesser extent with poetry and drama. Perhaps because there is a long history of reviews combining art criticism with political writing, critics seem to have taken for granted that this combination in *Cosmopolis* is self-explanatory. In *Cosmopolis*, however, literary and diplomatic texts enter into a productive dialogue with one another. This combination creates a particular kind of effect. The issue of Alsace-Lorraine provides a good illustration. In one of the final issues, the reader encounters 'Alsace-Lorraine' (10.29: 315–31), a characteristically wrought poem by George Meredith, which is the concluding part of a triptych that revolves around three moments in the history of modern France, the other two being 'The Revolution' (9.27, 625–34) and 'Napoleon' (10.28, 30–51). This poem is formally unlike Mallarmé's experiment with free verse or, indeed, unlike Anatole France's short story: it is an ode in various rhyme patterns, using mythic and allegorical images while treating of a historical topic. Whereas Mallarmé's '*Un coup de dés*' foreshadows the musical experiments of Guillaume Apollinaire, Meredith's poem is intensely graphic, at times moving toward the startling conjunctions characteristic of T. S. Eliot, as in the following description of a ghost surveying Alsace-Lorraine:

A lustreless Phosphor heading for daybeam
Night's dead-born,
His underworld eyeballs grip the cast of the land for a fray
Expugnant; [...] (10.29: 323)

The syntax and imagery of these lines are, if not compelling, certainly vivid. Each word presents a puzzle, which obscures the meaning of the lines as a whole: the 'Night's dead-born' are the fallen, Phosphor is the Morning Star (or light-bringer), the word 'expugnant' is a hapax, derived from the Latin *expugnare*, here used as meaning 'accomplished' or 'fought out'. Although these elements make 'Alsace-Lorraine' a very intellectual poem, from a formal point of view it is fairly classical, consisting of hexameters with a variety of iambs and anapaests, alluding to classical mythology, and using tropes such as allegory and personification. Formally, then, Meredith's serious, terse poem is the very opposite of the undecidability and playfulness one encounters in

Mallarmé's. At the same time, Meredith's poem sheds an altogether different light on the matter that 'Ignotus' (Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn) and 'Ignotissimus' (Gaston Moch) discuss in their anonymous articles on the question of Alsace-Lorraine. It is significant that the journal was as eclectic in the kind of literature as in the kind of politics that it included: there seems to have been a conscious effort to make the combination between literature and foreign policy a productive interchange.

To give another example, Conrad's 'An Outpost of Progress' (6.18: 609–20 and 7.19: 1–15) followed Rudyard Kipling's 'Slaves of the Lamp' (6.16: 1–19 and 6.17: 305–23), the first so-called Stalky story. The contrast between Conrad's and Kipling's stories mirrors the debates about imperialism that we find in the political contributions: whereas Conrad's tale is a scathing critique of England's colonial expansion, Kipling's first 'Stalky' story creates an imaginative link between the empire and the English schoolboy's natural domain. In the Benjaminian framework of this essay, Conrad and Kipling resemble translators in that they try to produce in their literary language the echo of an original, geopolitical discourse. These attempts do not add up to one great design; rather, they allow glimpses of what this design could have been.

At least two cultural highlights thematise this procedure. In Conrad's 'An Outpost of Progress', translation is also a theme and stylistic device. The names of the two men in charge of the trading station and their unidiomatic dialogue combine to suggest that they are both Belgian, Kayerts being a Flemish ex-bureaucrat and Carlier a Walloon 'ex-non-commissioned officer of cavalry in an army guaranteed harmless by several European Powers' (6.18: 610). Curiously, the story does not dwell on their Belgian background, as a result of which it seems as if English – gallicised though it may be – is their common tongue. Even more importantly, they cannot communicate with native traders, to which end they need the interpreting skills of the story's third protagonist, Makolo (also named Henry Price):

There was something in [the leader's] intonation, in the sounds of the long sentences he used, that startled the two whites. It was like a reminiscence of something not exactly familiar, and yet resembling the speech of civilised men. It sounded like one of those impossible languages which sometimes we hear in our dreams.

'What lingo is that?' said the amazed Carlier. 'In the first moment I fancied the fellow was going to speak French. Anyway, it is a different kind of gibberish to what we ever heard'.

'Yes', replied Kayerts. 'Hey, Makola, what does he say? Where do they come from? Who are they?'

The Diplomatic Design of Cosmopolis

But Makola, who seemed to be standing on hot bricks, answered hurriedly, 'I don't know. They come from very far. Perhaps Mrs Price will understand. They are perhaps bad men'. (6.18: 618)

In this vignette, different dreamlike 'lingos' coalesce without any kind of mediation. Tinged with the threat of violence, it acquires an additional layer of meaning when we consider its first appearance in the pages of *Cosmopolis*, where the principles of translation are meant to operate in a similar way, but to a very different, more peaceful purpose. In other words, Conrad's story seems to suggest that there is a geographical limit to the kind of diplomacy that the journal practised in its design.

The most instructive story in which the journal's conditions of possibility are thematised is arguably Henry James's 'The Figure in the Carpet', a short story which appeared in the first two issues. Obsessed by one of the novelist Hugh Vereker's clues, the story's narrator attempts to find the hidden meaning in Vereker's works. As with many of James's stories, the story is not so much about the secret, which is never revealed even if it exists, as it is about the blindness produced by the pursuit of knowledge. In many ways, this story is an allegory of (the impossibility of) reading, as J. Hillis Miller has shown. What is interesting for my concern with the politics of translation is that George Corvick, one of the narrator's friends and a fellow literary critic, uncovers the secret as he travels to India as a special commissioner – which makes him a figure not unlike contributors to *Cosmopolis* such as Max Müller, the Orientalist, who in a later issue published a piece on 'My Indian Friends' (11.32: 329–53). The missive in which Corvick sends the great news consists of only two words: "Eureka. Immense." That was all – he had saved himself the cost of the signature' (1.2: 375). The story itself does not make much of this detail and it is, in itself, of no importance to the plot. Read in the diplomatic texture of *Cosmopolis*, however, it acquires a certain depth. Apart from the importance of signatures, which I have already touched on, Corvick's two words are lamentably incomplete, but in fact open up a whole world of meaning. Given the fact that a few years later James recycled this plot-device in *The Ambassadors* (1903), in which the protagonist or 'eye' of the story, Lambert Strether, loses his ambassadorial function when he stops sending letters, one could add that this story is an allegory of reading as much as it is an allegory of diplomacy. James's story thus anticipates the use of diplomacy as a mirror image of the fragmentary aesthetic that one finds in Proust and Woolf, even as – read in its original context – it draws attention to the geopolitical concerns against which it resonated and from which it derived its creative energy.

'The Figure in the Carpet' is a rewarding case study from a theoretical point of view as well. In *The World Republic of Letters* (1999), Pascale Casanova used this story as a springboard for her investigations into the dynamics of world literature. In her reading, the carpet symbolises the global totality of all literary works, to which the weft of each singular work contributes a particular pattern or figure. The error of James's protagonist is to focus solely on the figure and to forget about the carpet. In a similar way, Casanova argued that, at the turn of the twenty-first century, scholars had yet to trace and describe the history and geography of the world literary space, a field distinct from the political realm, in which authors had been vying for literary capital. In the past twenty years, the field of world literature has seen many changes of perspective, though it remains a question whether these have been those that Casanova was asking for. The example of *Cosmopolis* teaches us that in scholarship on nineteenth-century cosmopolitanism, linguistic factors continue to set certain limitations: an attention to the journal's multilingualism, in the widest possible sense of that term, reveals a diplomatic design that may complement an analysis such as that of Tanya Agathocleous. At the same time, the example of *Cosmopolis* also teaches us that to examine the relationships between literary texts solely from a literary point of view, as Casanova attempts, is to risk losing sight of the importance of relevant geopolitical factors. Casanova's interpretation of 'The Figure in the Carpet' suits her purposes well, but misses the story's denouement in India, as well as the story's function within the pages of *Cosmopolis*, where literary and political texts are presented as part of a continuum. As translators of all hues, the contributors and editors of *Cosmopolis* may have been instrumental in creating and establishing value in a cultural system that operated on a European level but, in doing so, they were guided by geopolitical considerations as much as by literary predilections.

Notes

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1. Citations from *Cosmopolis* are all taken from the edition digitised in *British Periodicals Online*. Translations from the French and the German are my own.
2. For a full overview of the recent efflorescence of cosmopolitanism in literary studies, see Goodlad and Wright.
3. That the interaction between the two essays at this level may not be immediately apparent to the reader reading Benjamin in English is partially due to the translations of both essays. Interestingly, Edmund Jephcott translates 'rein' as 'unalloyed' whereas Harry Zohn in the first translation of 'The Task' translates it as 'pure', which introduces a degree of confusion. To make matters more complex, Jephcott in the passage above also translates 'rein' as 'nonviolent', which is of course an

The Diplomatic Design of Cosmopolis

interpretation, and one which refines Salzani's claim that only divine violence is pure. These slippages are not a negligible point, because they are precisely the kind of transformation that Benjamin is concerned with in his essay on translation. Because of the nature of its subject, critics have examined Harry Zohn's translation of Benjamin's essay with more than customary scrutiny; see Paul de Man, Carol Jacobs, and Steven Rendall.

4. For more on the debates about anonymity and signed contributions in nineteenth-century periodicals, see Elaine Hadley (125–74) and Helen Small.
5. For recent revisionist studies of the life and work of Andrew Lang, see Nathan Hensley, and Nathan Hensley and Molly Hillard.

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