Margaret C. Jacob

The cosmopolitan as a lived category

Cosmopolitans, as French philosopher Denis Diderot put it in his encyclopedia of 1751, are "strangers no where in the world."[1] By the time Diderot wrote, the term had become a commonplace. Since then, the cosmopolitan has remained largely that – a term. As a result, the history of cosmopolitan language, the history of the idea, has been carefully and cogently written. Excellent accounts now exist of writers and philosophers, largely from the early modern period, who wrote idealistically and learnedly about the cosmopolitan.[2] We know very little, however, about cosmopolitan practices, about actual behavior that might legitimately warrant the label, in any historical period, including our own. As long as wars have their day-to-day histories, and their antithesis remains an idea in search of an instantiation, the critics and defamers of the cosmopolitan will continue to point to its vapidity, its pie-in-the-sky, no-one-ever-went-to-war-under-the-flag-of-the-cosmopolite irrelevance.

Writing such a history of lived practices and habitudes requires sources, finding actual institutions or events

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1 As cited in Thomas J. Schlereth, *The Cosmopolitan Ideal in Enlightenment Thought: Its Form and Function in the Ideas of Franklin, Hume, and Voltaire, 1694 – 1790* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 47.

2 See ibid. and Andrea Albrecht, *Kosmopolitismus: Weltbürgerdiskurse in Literatur, Philosophie und Publizistik um 1800* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005); cf. Derek Heater, *World Citizenship and Government: Cosmopolitan Ideas in the History of Western Political Thought* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996) and Karen O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). See also Anthony Pagden, "The Genesis of 'Governance' and Enlightenment Conceptions of the Cosmopolitan World Order," *International Social Science Journal* 155 (March 1998): 7 – 15.

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that might legitimately be interrogated to reveal behavior reasonably described as cosmopolitan. For the period of the eighteenth century, when the cosmopolitan was used widely as a compliment, one way of proceeding might be to start off by sampling the behavior of those who did not value it. In early-modern Europe, an authoritarian – specifically clerical – vision of the way traditional society should behave existed. Take the Papal territory of Avignon, for example. The Roman Catholic Inquisition gave Avignon the distinction of being the only French-speaking city policed by an inquisition. The city's inquisitional archives, lost up until 1677 and then mercifully complete up to 1790 (when the French revolutionaries took over the city), tell a tale of bizarre phobias and cruelties, along with a carefully cultivated pursuit of absolutist political goals, all in the service of the church. Indeed the Avignon authorities established a more prosecutorial atmosphere than their rather sluggish counterparts in Spain, Venice, and Naples.[3]

The Avignon interrogations and letters back to Rome reveal what clerical anti-cosmopolites found most dangerous. Papal authorities fumed at Jews who refused to stay in appointed hotels (or who stayed too long) or whose windows and doors looked out on Christian holy places. The tardy could be arrested; the doors and windows boarded up. When Christian children baptized Jewish infants in their care, authorities removed the child to an orphanage to be raised Catholic. We know about one such child in Avignon because the records of the Inquisition reveal its effort to sue the father so that he would pay for the care and feeding of his legally abducted child. In Amsterdam in the same period, Jewish minors who wanted to convert to Christianity against the wishes of their parents were forbidden to do so. The mixing of religions so concerned the good fathers in Avignon, too, that they were prepared to spy on George I and his summering entourage, lest this "Anglican sect" infect the gullible. The mixing of social classes also brought down the wrath of Papal authorities, as did any hint of heresy. (The freemasons had their lodges raided and goods confiscated into the 1780s.) The archives of the Inquisition signal that any inquiry into Western cosmopolitanism before 1800 must focus not simply on the tenacity of national, ethnic, or regional identities, but also on the force of religion, on a complex set of loyalties that might make people stay among their own kind and avoid strangers or foreigners – or any sort of difference.

Other institutions were far less forbidding than the Inquisition and more capable of bearing the label cosmopolitan. Commentators have often associated early-modern European science and its academies with cosmopolitan impulses. Scientists crossed national and confessional borders and willingly participated as observers and collectors on global expeditions that brought back natural knowledge, as well as great imperial wealth – first to the Spanish, then to the Dutch and English, and finally the French.[4] Much misery was inflicted around the globe in the process, but the catholicity of intellectual interests brought about by overseas trade and ex-

3 See E. William Monter and John Tedeschi, "Toward a Statistical Profile of the Italian Inquisitions, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries," in E. William Monter, *Enforcing Morality in Early Modern Europe* (London: Variorium Reprints, 1987), 130 – 157.

4 See Alix Cooper, *Inventing the Indigenous: Local Knowledge and Natural History in Early Modern*

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ploration, and by the social mixing and correspondence of the academies, could on occasion be described as cosmopolitan.[5]

Before 1700, alchemists in particular deliberately invoked a cosmopolitan stance.[6] The goal of much medical alchemy, aside from pharmacological interventions, lay in the search for the elixir of life. This search for longevity required border crossing, and a constant exchange of recipes and substances across the expanse of Europe and into the colonies was commonplace in alchemical circles. The early years of The French Academy of Sciences in Paris were spent performing alchemical distillations, and their organizer, the medical doctor Samuel Du Clos, also introduced Boyle's ideas about the mechanical philosophy almost as quickly as they were published or transmitted to him by Boyle himself. However, in 1685 a representative of the crown went into the court-sponsored academy and instructed it to stop "the great work" of alchemy and get on with business more directly useful to state power, like mapping the whole of the country.[7]

Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), introduction.

5 For recent scholarship on the process as experienced by the Dutch see Harold J. Cook, *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); also Anne Goldgar, *Tulipmania: Money, Honor, and Knowledge in the Dutch Golden Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Julia Adams, *The Familial State: Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005). For a look at the nature of Dutch imperialism in the period and its impact on the visual arts see Julie Berger Hochstrasser, *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). See also Antonio Barrera-Osorio, *Experiencing Nature: The Spanish American Empire and the Early Scientific Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006); Miguel de Asúa and Roger French, *A New World of Animals: Early Modern Europeans on the Creatures of Iberian America* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2005).

6 A. Everaerts used "cosmopolitiae"; Michael Sendivogius (1566–1636) had his works collected under the title *Les oeuvres du Cosmopolite* (see the catalogue of the Bakken Library, Minneapolis). The National Medical Library in Washington, D.C., lists a work by Sendivogius as *Cosmopolite; ou Nouvelle lumiere chimyque*, Paris, 1669 (first edition 1618); the Dutch title makes the point even clearer: *Cosmopolite, dat is: Borgher der Werelt. Of Het nieuwe Licht van de wetenschap van natuurlycke dinghen*, trans. Abba Starkse in Hem (Amsterdam: 1627); cf. Clovis Hesteau, *Traittez de l'harmonie et constitution général du vray sel, secret des Philosophes, & l'esprit universelle du monde, suivant le troisiesme principe du Cosmopolite* [i.e., M. Sendivogius], (Paris: Jeremie Perieret et Abdias Buisard, 1621); Nicolas Flamel, *Thresor de Philosophie, ou original du Desir Desiré . . . la composition de l'oeuvre physique, In Cosmopolite* (1618); [John Frederick Houppreght] *Aurifontina Chymica; or a Collection of Fourteen small Treatises Concerning the First Matter of Philosophers, For the discovery of their Mercury . . . for the benefit of Mankind in general* (London: William Cooper, 1680); Eirenaeus Philalethes Anglus, Cosmopolita, *An Exposition upon Sir George Ripley's Epistle to King Edward IV* (London: William Cooper, 1677), title page; cf. Klaus Vondung, "Millenarianism, Hermeticism, and the Search for a Universal Science," in Stephen A. McKnight, ed., *Science, Pseudo-Science, and Utopianism in Early Modern Thought* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 118–140; cf. Antonio Clericuzio, "New Light on Benjamin Worsley's Natural Philosophy," in Mark Greengrass, Michael Leslie, and Timothy Raylor, eds., *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation: Studies in Intellectual Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 236–246. For the world in which alchemists lived see Deborah E. Harkness, *The Jewel House: Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

7 Margaret C. Jacob, *Strangers Nowhere in the World: The Rise of Cosmopolitanism in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), chap. two.

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Stock exchanges, too, it was said, encouraged similar cosmopolitan mores. Poets and commentators like Addison and Steele, writing in 1711 in their famous *The Spectator*, said that the conduct of "the private business of Mankind" turned the exchange into a "Metropolis, a kind of *Emporium* for the whole Earth." Factors, the merchants who made deals for other merchants, they said, "are what Ambassadors are in the Politick World." Yet even Addison and Steele had to admit that the cosmopolitan had limits; always amid the swirl of international commerce men stood with their countrymen: "Sometimes I am jostled among a Body of *Armenians*: Sometimes I am lost in a Crowd of *Jews*, and sometimes . . . in a Group of *Dutchmen*. I am a *Dane*, *Swede*, or *French-Man* at different times." Nonetheless, the dizzying experience left the reporters describing the ultimate cosmopolitan ideal: "I . . . rather fancy my self . . . [as] a Citizen of the World."[8] Voltaire wrote the most famous description of the Royal Exchange, published in 1733:

> A place more venerable than many courts of justice, where the representatives of all nations meet for the benefit of mankind. There the Jew, the Mohammedan, and the Christian transact together as though they all professed the same religion, and give the name of Infidel to none but bankrupts. There the Presbyterian confides in the Anabaptist, and the Churchman depends on the Quaker's word.[9]

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A 1780s manuscript sketch of the floor of the London exchange made by a visiting French engineer suggests that by then national identities competed with professional as well as religious ones. The sketch of the floor plan shows the familiar groupings – "place hollandaise," "place des Indes Orientales," "place Française" – but also new ones: "the place of the Quakers," "the place of the Jews," "the place of the silk merchants," the drapers, druggists, and so on. Dated more or less contemporaneously with Kant's famous meditation on the necessity for the cosmopolitan, the sketch tells us that selling draperies may have begun to give an identity as much as did one's being a Quaker or coming from the Dutch Republic.[10] The sketch also conforms to what we know about the Amsterdam exchange from an even earlier period. Guild identity weakened as merchants from all over received individual freedoms to trade and were just as likely to identify by their trade, their city, or their nation.[11]

International commerce in bills and goods wasn't automatically linked to the cosmopolitan, though. In Antwerp during the later part of the sixteenth century municipal records bear witness to men entering the exchange armed and with bodyguards. Traders had been murdered on the floor of the exchange by their fellow countrymen or by foreigners, if surnames are any guide. (Some of

8 *The Spectator*, Sunday, May 19, 1711, and reprinted in Ann Saunders, ed., *The Royal Exchange, Publication 152* (London: London Topographical Society, 1998), 206 – 207.

9 *Letters Concerning the English Nation*, in Margaret C. Jacob, *The Enlightenment: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford, 2001), 119.

10 This sketch is reproduced in Jacob, *The Enlightenment*, 115. The original can be found at École des ponts et chaussées, Paris.

11 Oscar Gelderblom, "De economische en juridische positie van buitenlandse looplieden in Amsterdam in de zestiende en zeventiende eeuw," in Leo Lucassen, ed., *Amsterdammer worden. Migranten hun organisaties en inburgering, 1600 – 2000* (Amsterdam: Vossiuspers, 2004), 169 – 188.

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this violence might have spilled over from decades of religious turmoil and the civil war against Spain.) Not until well into the seventeenth century did the floor of the Antwerp exchange finally take on the relative calm to be seen elsewhere. In the crash of 1720, which affected the Paris, London, and Amsterdam exchanges most deeply, literature and images appeared in Dutch that were in many instances markedly anti-Semitic. The Jews or *smousen* – in contemporary slang – were singled out as instigators of the collapse.[12]

In France most exchanges were open for an hour or two a day, their entrances guarded by archers and the lieutenant general of the police. Entry required a pass and, remarkably, in contrast to the rest of western Europe, women were forbidden entirely.[13] Protestants could not become agents of change, a rule reaffirmed in 1766. Only in 1780 was a Protestant merchant in Marseille allowed to join the Chamber of Commerce.[14] In 1631 the Consul in Lyon gave the merchants *un place de Change* with its own *corps de garde*. By 1637 a new building was in place; two years later it got a clock.[15] But unlike the neutral and regulating symbols of time, or the busts of kings found elsewhere, the bourse in Lyon installed a statue of the Virgin Mary. Decades earlier Lyon had been a site of bitter contestation between Protestants and Catholics. If early modern French Protestants made their way to the building they were meant to know that the power of the Catholic Church remained intact, at least in the temple of money, or *la loge du change*, as the Lyon bourse came to be known. In 1685 Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes, and French Protestants had to convert, go to jail, or find a way to leave. When a Chamber of Commerce was finally established in 1703, all its members had to be Catholic.[16]

A decade before Voltaire penned his famous lines about the London exchange, an anonymous observer of the Marseille exchange waxed in rapture: "Our loge is a room where strangers can barely be distinguished from our representative . . . our factors and couriers are our ambassadors . . . and maintain good relations within the rich society of men." But when this same admirer of social mixing went on to describe all the nationalities to be seen on the floor he remarked on elbowing crowds "of Jews or usurers."[17]

Commerce did not inexorably lead to cosmopolitan mores without the firm presence of a civilizing force with police

12 *Het groot tafereel der dwaasheid: vertoonende de opkomst, voortgang en ondergang der actie, bubbel en windnegotie, in Vrankryk, Engeland, en de Nederlanden, gepleegt in den jaare MDCCXX: zynde een verzameling van alle de conditien en projecten van de opgeregte compagnien van assurantie, navigatie, commercie, &c. in Nederland, zo wel die in gebruik zyn gebragt, als die door de h. staten van eenige provintien zyn verworpen: als meede konstplaaten, comedien en gedigten . . . : gedrukt tot waarshouwinge voor de nakomelingen, in 't noodlottige jaar, voor veel zotte en wyze* (n.p., 1720).

13 *Manuel des agens de change et des courtiers de commerce, contenant les Édits. . . .* (Paris: Chez Mme Ve. J. Decle, 1823), 59 – 60.

14 Charles Carrière, *Négociants Marseillais au xviiie siècle*, vol. 1 (Marseille: Institut historique de Provence, 1973), 228.

15 Archives municipales, Lyon, MS Bb180, fol. 72.

16 MSS Chambre de Commerce de Lyon. Deliberations August 1702. Repertoire du premier Registre; commencé le 21 August 1702; MS fol. 2, 1703.

17 *Lettres d'un négociant de Marseille à un des amis a Paris, concernant le commerce*, third letter (n.p., 1726), 7.

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power. In every exchange, the records tell us that guards, whether military in France or civilian in London, kept a careful watch on the day's proceedings. Commercial life may have thrived on fairness and politeness, law and order, but all were (and are) extremely fragile. Tensions existed beneath the surface of an imagined conviviality, and they surfaced when times got hard.

Beginning in 1772, and reaching its nadir in Marseille in 1774, a serious economic crisis gripped France. The end of a preceding Atlantic boom, the bust manifested itself at the foreign exchanges and as a credit crisis.[18] By 1773 it was clear that little was being done anywhere to stop local bankrupts from reaching the floor of the bourse. Foreigners who were bankrupt, it was argued, had to be stopped and forced to register with the justice of the peace, which would have entailed angry denunciations on the floor of the exchange once a bankrupt could be identified.[19] Perhaps Voltaire had been right when he said that the only infidels in such a temple would be the bankrupt.

In 1773–1774, cosmopolitanism gave way first to inhospitable suspicion and then to anger and panic. The authorities in Marseille, like so many commentators in England, saw bankruptcy in moral terms and railed against those who might in other circumstances be seen as unlucky, rather than villainous.[20] They also wanted to impose a collective, rather than a simple individual responsibility on men whom they imagined as willfully bad credit risks.

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None of these measures, at least in Marseille, proved to be sufficient, largely because of the changing face of bankruptcy. Until 1774 the problems presented by the absence of credit and capital might be blamed on bankrupt merchants. But in May of that year one of the courtiers of change, a royal official whose office was inheritable and state-guaranteed, went under. Within five months over 150 merchants (of about 600) also defaulted. These royal officials, a creation of Louis XIV, and the credit they dispensed had dominated the floor of the Marseille exchange.[21] Unlike London, Antwerp, or Amsterdam, no shops or hawkers were allowed in the building to interfere with royally appointed authority and profit. Only notaries checked the power of the courtiers; they were expected to register deals and know something about all the parties and their creditworthiness.[22] Since 1709 the courtiers had acted as bankers as well as the buy-

18 L. M. Cullen, "History, Economic Crises, and Revolution: Understanding Eighteenth-Century France," *The Economic History Review* 46 (4) (1993): 640–641.

19 Archives Patrimoine-culturel de la Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie Marseille-Provence (CCI), MS D 51 letter dated Bordeaux, 18 October 1773, "il est deffendu à tous faillie et Banqueroutiers de frequenter notre Bourse. . . ."

20 For English moralizing see Julian Hoppit, *Risk and Failure in English Business, 1700–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 164.

21 Archives Patrimoine-culturel de la Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie Marseille-Provence, MS L v 29, where we are told that the courtiers rented 20 bureaux in "une grand salle au dessous de la maison de Ville qu'on appelle vulgairement la Loge et ou les negociants rassembleur tous les jour on y fit construire vingt petits bureaux qui entourent de la salle . . . les courtiers . . . ventes et achapter secretement."

22 On the importance of the notaries in Paris see Philip T. Hoffman, Gilles Postel-Vinay, and Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, "Information and Economic History: How the Credit Market in Old

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ers and sellers of merchandise, and, apparently with abandon, they had overextended lines of credit to merchants and collected interest and earned commissions for themselves and the crown. A bankruptcy by even one of them spelled doom.[23]

The crisis of 1774 highlights the strains on the civility and customs of a royally supervised exchange. At the height of the crisis a prominent merchant and former city official marched on to the floor and in full drama denounced the courtiers and demanded their suppression.[24] Others argued that self-interest had become a vice: "The mobs in our stock exchange fight and destroy each other out of their individual interests and their prejudices." "Capitalists" need a motive for entering such a dangerous market, an important commentator argued, and only higher interest rates will appeal. If these ruinous practices continue, he warned, "a much greater part of our commerce will pass into the hands of foreigners." The anger at the courtiers became so intense that within a year the state had to suppress and reorganize the corps. The French Revolution saw the abolishment of courtiers across the country, and early in the nineteenth century Paris acquired a bourse modeled on what existed in the major cities of its northern neighbors.

When stock exchanges displayed signs of a cosmopolitan openness, how dependent was that spirit on the limitless possibility of profit and prosperity? The breakdown of civility in Marseille, and earlier in Amsterdam during the 1720 crash, points to a deep interconnection between these two impulses, the one for gain, the other for civil and cosmopolitan interaction that eased deal making and the passage to wealth. But how much was the structure of the exchange itself, rather than individual avarice, to blame for the breakdown of civility in Marseille? Perhaps as long as government-sponsored monopolists controlled a critical part of the market – the availability of money or credit – the stability of mercantile mores and customs would always remain fragile. As the situation in Marseille illustrates, the preservation of a cosmopolitan market depended heavily on a belief that no single body, sanctioned by the state, could manipulate the market and get away with it legally.

In addition, the open and cosmopolitan ambiance of the exchange masked the realities of the market. Nowhere could merchants discover who, whether fellow merchant or courtier, was in fact overextended. (Indeed mercantile elites did not want to reveal this sort of information, especially not to the tax-hungry state.[25]) Private reputation, not the reality of the situation, mattered above all else – certainly above the health of the public's interest. And when harsh economic realities were revealed, denunciation and moralizing displaced even a modicum of cosmopolitan peacefulness in the exchange.

Regime Paris Forces Us to Rethink the Transition to Capitalism," *The American Historical Review* 104 (1) (1999): 69 – 94.

23 A detailed account of these events can be found in Louis Bergasse, *Histoire du commerce de Marseille*, vol. 4 (Paris: Plon, 1954), 621 – 630.

24 For the printed text found at Archives Patrimoine-culturel de la Chambre de Commerce, Le Sieur Roland, *Mémoire à consulter et consultation par le sieur Simon Roland, ancien premier échevin de la ville de Marseille et l'un des membres de la chambre de commerce*.

25 See the discussion of the attempts at reform in the 1770s in Mark Potter, *Corps and Clienteles:*

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It is good to know that the cosmopolitan has a history as an idea; it is better understood when we examine it as lived experience. Remnants of the Inquisition, such as the Index of Forbidden Books, lasted into the 1960s. Wherever censors of whatever variety succeed, cosmopolitan mores falter, if not wither away. Some kinds of intellectual endeavors, science and medicine as examples (if left to develop their own customs) can inculcate expansive forms of border-crossing as well as habits of quality control – at least in the first instance among highly educated men.[26] Exclusionary categories and identities die hard, though. Opening borders, as these brief historical examples seek to show, requires contestation and a careful vigilance aimed at churches or states or elites with an interest in keeping those borders closed.

Public Finance and Political Change in France, 1688 – 1715 (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2003), 162.

26 For a philosophical elaboration on this point see Pierre Bourdieu, *Science of Science and Reflexivity*, trans. Richard Nice (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); for more historical examples see Lynn K. Nybart and Thomas H. Broman, eds., "Science and Civil Society," Special issue, *Osiris* 17 (2002).

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