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## ANDREW LANG'S DISCURSIVE COSMOPOLITANISM IN *LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE*

Linda K. Hughes

As Caroline Sumpter recently reminds us, “Constructions of [Andrew] Lang as the hearty anti-decadent critic have been tenacious, but they tell only half the story.”<sup>1</sup> Lang in fact played an important role in what Michael Shaw terms the “polyvocal[ity]” of the cosmopolitan Scottish Celtic revival at the fin de siècle.<sup>2</sup> A scion of Scotland born in Selkirk in 1844, Lang pursued his prolific writing career in London, yet Scotland was never far from his mind. Although his indefatigable publishing career spared little time for crossing borders through international travels, I shall explore an intrinsic cosmopolitanism in his writing arising from his expansive intellectual inquiry and erudition. If Lang’s own literary reputation rested on his prodigious rate of book publication, he exercised real power over the larger world of letters through his monthly causerie, “At the Sign of the Ship,” which was published in *Longman’s Magazine* from January 1886 until the magazine closed in 1905. In the 1880s and 1890s, sales of the magazine often reached as many as 100,000, and excerptings and reprintings of Lang’s column in American and colonial periodicals or, closer to home, within the British isles by means of cut and paste journalism, extended the column’s reach still further. Both Marysa Demoor and Nathan Hensley testify to the popularity and impact of “At the Sign of the Ship”; Hensley remarks that Lang was famous “to the point of cliché.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Caroline Sumpter, “Devulgarizing Dickens: Andrew Lang, Homer and the Rise of Psycho-Folklore,” *ELH*, 87.3 (2020): 747. I wish to thank Sanjana Chowdhury for her excellent research assistance in 2020 in support of this essay, notably in compiling topic lists of all “Ship” columns from January 1886 to December 1899 (excepting those previously annotated by Sharin Schroeder online at <https://andrewlang.org>).

<sup>2</sup> Michael Shaw, *The Fin-de-Siècle Scottish Revival: Romance, Decadence and Celtic Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 22.

<sup>3</sup> Marysa Demoor, “Andrew Lang’s Causeries 1874-1912,” *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 21.1 (1988): 15, 20; and Nathan Hensley, “Network, History, Method: Andrew Lang in and after the 1880s,” in Penny Fielding and Andrew Taylor, eds,

And this power had specific implications for Scotland in relation to cosmopolitanism. In this essay I argue not only that Lang himself was a cosmopolitan thinker and writer, but more particularly that his "At the Sign of the Ship" column fashioned a cosmopolitan Scotland that itself "traveled" through what I am calling "discursive cosmopolitanism."

Cosmopolitanism has been variously conceptualized, most often in relation to the individual as an acquisition or orientation (or both). Immanuel Kant's use of "cosmopolitan" to designate a "citizen of the world" could be applied to those who exercised extraordinary privilege based on wealth and social position and could travel at will.<sup>4</sup> But Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen's approach to cosmopolitanism as inherently involving multiplicity is far more relevant to "At the Sign of the Ship." As Vertovec and Cohen remark, cosmopolitanism is "something that simultaneously: (a) transcends the seemingly exhausted nation-state model; (b) is able to mediate actions and ideals oriented both to the universal and the particular, the global and the local; (c) is culturally anti-essentialist; and (d) is capable of representing variously complex repertoires of allegiance, identity, and interest."<sup>5</sup> For Scotland, such "complex repertoires" included near neighbours, as well as extending further afield, since the 1707 Act of Union ruled out an independent standing army and removed a strictly enforced boundary with England. Union brought with it a mix of national and linguistic identities, allegiances and interests, to which Lang was well-attuned. Moreover, well before and after 1707, Scotland enjoyed close relations with France, where Stuart heirs to the English throne took refuge

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*Nineteenth-Century Literature in Transition: The 1880s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 122. Two recent editions of Lang's prose include some of his work for *Longman's*: Andrew Terverson, Alexandra Warwick, and Leigh Wilson, eds, *The Edinburgh Critical Edition of the Selected Writings of Andrew Lang*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015); Tom Hubbard and Celeste Ray, eds, *Selected Writings of Andrew Lang*, 3 vols (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017); and see also William Donaldson, "Andrew Lang: A World We Have Lost," *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 43.1 (2017): 155-165.

<sup>4</sup> Though Amanda Anderson probes the progressive possibilities of "detachment" among cosmopolitans, the term was sometimes used negatively by Victorians to imply detachment so complete that it amounted to indifference to local allegiances or commitments. This, at least, was the fear expressed in Britain from conservative critics who scented too little patriotism in the writers who seemed cosmopolitan or repeatedly praised another culture and observed its superiority to British practice on selected points. For Anderson's influential counterargument, see *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, "Introduction, Conceiving Cosmopolitanism," in Vertovec and Cohen, eds, *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 4.

during the English civil war and after the Glorious Revolution. From the seventeenth century into the fin de siècle, additionally, Scotland and its people relied economically on trade within the British isles and on international markets. By the nineteenth century the medium of print was yet one more means by which Scotland, Scots, and Scottishness could enter into global exchanges of thought and culture. Indeed, Valeska Huber and Jan C. Jansen assert that “new global technologies such as steam ships and printing presses enabled the creation of cosmopolitan hubs in bustling port cities and the emergence of ‘cosmopolitan thought zones’ stretching across entire oceans.”<sup>6</sup>

Lang did not directly circulate Scotland and Scottishness using textual “Ships” as his vessels; so simple an approach would not have suited his cosmopolitan embrace of multiple allegiances as a literary man, nor provided enough entertainment to subscribers to enable his column to endure for some nineteen years. To understand his alternative practice of discursive cosmopolitanism it is first necessary to understand how his London-based column worked. The “causerie,” a French-derived term, was according to Christopher Kent first adopted by George Henry Lewes in the *Fortnightly Review*. Literally *causerie* designates an informal conversation, but in journalism it signified a print literary “chat.” By the 1880s the causerie was a well-recognized periodical feature, and Lang’s “At the Sign of the Ship” in *Longman’s Magazine* was arguably the most famous.<sup>7</sup>

Marysa Demoor emphasizes the qualities of “graceful style,” “wit,” knowledge, and original observations on a broad range of books and literary trends that made Lang’s causeries stand out above others; she also traces the personal opinions on literary works and publishing that Lang injected into his column. Nathan Hensley, examining the column within the framework of Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network-Theory, finds Lang’s “Ships” more notable for a mode of authorship based not on inspiration or originality but on “ensemble” assemblages that relied heavily on other people’s works and observations. As Hensley remarks of the effect, in Lang’s hands the causerie “performed the work of interconnection in structural terms, as it jumped with ease—and often without attribution—between seemingly original ideas, new and older verse, cited text, parodies

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<sup>6</sup> Valeska Huber and Jan C. Jansen, “Dealing with Difference: Cosmopolitanism in the Nineteenth-Century World of Empires,” *Humanity* 12.1 (2021): 41.

<sup>7</sup> See Demoor, “Andrew Lang’s Causeries,” 16; Christopher Kent, “Causeries,” in Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor, eds, *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism*, (Ghent and London: Academia Press and the British Library, 2009), 102.

of contemporary culture, and citations of other news stories.”<sup>8</sup> I build upon Hensley’s mention of Lang’s “jumps” to suggest that a Lang causerie was also a virtual schematic of Lang’s mind that inhabited expansive spatial and temporal dimensions. Each month’s reading revealed his movements of mind as his synapses fired, generating an implied neural map and revealing Lang’s personality, broad learning, and new reading in real time—in short, a virtual chart of mental journeys that propelled Lang’s print discursive journeys. As my examples show, these journeys were deeply cosmopolitan and hence the designation “discursive cosmopolitanism” to describe the practice enacted in and through these texts.

Lang himself repeatedly commented on his aims and method in his causeries. In his inaugural “At the Sign of the Ship” in January 1886, he remarked in a footnote to his newly-penned “Ballade Introductory” that each month he intended to “publish some pages of Gossip on Men and Books.”<sup>9</sup> By February 1889 he struck an explicitly cosmopolitan note when he pleaded with international authors not to shoot presentation copies of their books to him only to make a notable exception: “books or articles on folklore, or any other special topic, which appear in thy foreign reviews, these are welcome, and this exchange of ideas between English and foreign antiquaries is blameless and serviceable.”<sup>10</sup> A yet later comment is the most revealing illumination of his discursive cosmopolitanism. As he announced to his readers in September 1892, “I have an authentic message to deliver to my age. This Ship is not a review.... The vessel sails at its own free will among the oceans of literature, and the skipper selects what takes his fancy.”<sup>11</sup> As the figurative language of this comment demonstrates, even Lang’s assertion of intellectual autonomy is driven by a sense of global interconnection and the desire to explore further shores.

Lang navigated his discursive cosmopolitanism by precisely this principle, and in the process he fashioned a cosmopolitan Scotland and Scottish culture by inserting the land, its literature, its history, and its language into transnational oceans of print as essential and expected elements. Though Lang had no desire to reform his readers, his discursive journeys implicitly enlarged readers’ cosmopolitan sensibilities. For Lang’s causeries made it entirely plausible that readers might expect Scotland and things Scottish to appear and enjoy equal standing alongside

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<sup>8</sup> Demoor, “Andrew Lang’s Causeries,” 15; Hensley, “Network, History, Method,” 126, 128.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Lang, “At the Sign of the Ship,” *Longman’s Magazine*, 7 (January 1886): 317 n.1.

<sup>10</sup> Lang, “At the Sign of the Ship,” *Longman’s Magazine*, 13 (February 1889): 447.

<sup>11</sup> Lang, “At the Sign of the Ship,” *Longman’s Magazine*, 20 (September 1892): 550.

Continental cultures but also as an important world presence among American, Asian, and African cultures. To use a homelier metaphor and language, each month Lang cooked up a cosmopolitan stew of words and works and almost always ensured that Scotland would be present to add its own rich flavor.

To illustrate this, I shall examine selected "Ships" from early, middle, and late in the column's run to indicate how Scotland functioned within the discursive cosmopolitanism that Lang enacted for his transnational audience. In his very first paragraph following his "Ballade Introductory" in Lang's debut causerie, Scotland sprang up as a definitive reference point as he chatted about the many possible derivations of the transnational term "boss." His mind raced from a Latin quotation mocking the unfortunate name of the Warden of Merton when Lang was a fellow, Robert Bullock Marsham ("'*Bos locutus est*'"—the cow spoke) to American slang for "head man" to a possible derivation from the Netherlands. Then, glancing on the way at the embryonic *Oxford English Dictionary*, Lang settled on Scotland's John Knox as a definitive source for "boss" as head man long before the term traveled to the U.S. Lang capped this linguistic excursion with a witty return to the "bovine" since in Scotland "boss" can also mean "empty" or "empty-headed" (like a boss or a cow). Having revealed that Scottish language moved transnationally in the sixteenth century, Lang's column reinserted both Scottish history and language into transnational circulation once more late in the nineteenth.<sup>12</sup>

At other times Lang inserted Scotland into his column by way of a childhood or other personal memory, as when in his September 1886 "Ship" he first noted the tale of St. Columba becoming literate after eating a cake with letters of the alphabet on it, as reported by French folklorist M. Gaidoz, who also identified Roman precedents of the tale. Lang then recalled how he himself had eaten lettered gingerbread as a child at Scottish fairs, when the cake interested him far more than the letters.<sup>13</sup> Scottish folklore more prominently came into view in the February 1889 "Ship," in which Lang quoted at length a Cornish variant of a Cinderella tale but prefaced this by asserting the superior richness of Scottish over English folk materials in general: "The English ballads, as compared with the Scotch, are notably poor and trivial, whatever reason we may invent or discover." And after reprinting the Cornish folk tale "Cap o'Rushes," he suggested Scottish precedence here too, since the Suffolk title "answers to the Coat of Rushes, *Rashin Coatie*, which the Scottish Cinderella wears."

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<sup>12</sup> Lang, "At the Sign of the Ship," *Longman's Magazine*, 7 (January 1886): 318.

<sup>13</sup> Lang, "At the Sign of the Ship," *Longman's Magazine*, 8 (September 1886): 565-6.

Lang then took readers on flying mental excursions to India, Finland, and France for other variants.<sup>14</sup>

Nineteenth-century Scotland and its writers also figured in Lang's "Ships." Lang mentioned Sir Walter Scott and his fiction often, assuming Scott's greatness and impact on world letters as a given. His prime example of a contemporary Scottish writer was Robert Louis Stevenson. The February 1886 "Ship" opened with attention to Tennyson's 1885 volume *Tiresias* (which Lang admired), de Banville's verse tribute to poet Victor Hugo, and Lang's own verse tribute to Tennyson ("Ballade for the Laureate"). Into this mix of notable transnational authors, Lang then inserted Robert Louis Stevenson and his new story, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Rather than offering a conventional review or puff, he began with the tale's origin in a dream that Stevenson had had years earlier. But that he was promoting his fellow Scot was unmistakable.<sup>15</sup> The paragraph on inspiring dreams and frightening tales additionally placed Stevenson in the context of world authors Hoffmann and Poe, as well as Thackeray, Scott, and Coleridge, past whom Lang breezed before returning to Stevenson to end this excursus. Lang did not presume to recommend Stevenson's tale, but offered (as he did with his ballade to Tennyson) his personal tribute: "it seems to me a masterpiece of the terrible and grotesque, and to possess withal an unobtrusive and salutary moral."<sup>16</sup> The sweep and range of reference running through his chat forces a set of global interconnections for both Scott and Stevenson, creating a transhistorical and transnational Scottish cosmopolitanism in the process.

In the 1890s Lang turned more decisively to Scotland and Scottish topics in his "Ships." Scottish literature and history dominated the April 1892 "Ship," the very density of references forming an implicit riposte to one of Lang's favorite antagonists, American critic and novelist W. D. Howells, who dared to elevate European realists over Walter Scott and Thackeray.<sup>17</sup> Howells also elicited a verse reply from Lang, with the line

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<sup>14</sup> Lang, "At the Sign of the Ship," *Longman's Magazine*, 13 (February 1889): 441, 444.

<sup>15</sup> According to Oscar Maurer, Lang had joined others in Stevenson's circle of friends to help push the new writer's work in the literary world. Maurer adds that *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* had not been selling well until Lang's comments in this February 1886 "Ship," reinforced by a review in the *Times* by James Payne, brought the novella widespread attention and success. See Maurer, "Andrew Lang and 'Longman's Magazine,' 1882-1905," *University of Texas Studies in English*, 34 (1955): 160-1.

<sup>16</sup> Lang, "At the Sign of the Ship," *Longman's Magazine*, 7 (February 1886): 439-42.

<sup>17</sup> See Marysa Demoor, "Andrew Lang versus W. D. Howells: A Late-Victorian Literary Duel," *Journal of American Studies*, 21.3 (1987): 416-22; esp. 418.

"Sir Walter lives!," even as Lang gave a generous transatlantic nod to Hawthorne. On the next page Lang mentioned both Scott's *Heart of Midlothian* and Stevenson's *The Wrecker*. Changing the tone by reprinting Graham R. Tomson's poem "The Golden Hour," Lang then was off again to Scotland, Scottish history, and his beloved St. Andrews, first with the "Gowrie Conspiracy" dating to the time of King James, which was documented in the 1827 *Transactions of the Perth Antiquarian Society*. The mention of Perth brought up by association the late seventeenth-century proposal to move the university from St. Andrews, where the citizens loathed learning and learned men, to Perth. As Lang quipped of the episode, "The University thinks that, at Perth, it might civilize the Highlands. It despairs of civilizing St. Andrews. Fortunately things have mended; the migration to Perth was never made." A page later he was still taking readers to St. Andrews and its lore, as well as to Edinburgh and Scott's *Bride of Lammermoor*. Lang then sped onward to Thomas Hood and, demonstrating his own receptivity to Continental authors, to Renan and Paul de Kock before coming back in the last sentence to include "Mrs. Oliphant" as well.<sup>18</sup> Throughout, Lang assumes a familiarity with Scottish writers, locations and historical events that further deepens the cosmopolitan character of his excursus.

In the July 1896 "Ship" Lang inserted a reference to Stevenson while discussing at length a book on children's psychology, a discussion that included Lang's interesting pairing of Walter Scott and George Sand, who could both visualize scenes vividly even as children. Then Lang's mind took dizzying leaps through space and time from Europe and Scotland, including its trout, to Australian and North American indigenes (delivering egregiously racist comments on these last two) and on to Easter Island and ancient Egypt. But he landed back in Scotland as part of his passionate defense of Scottish writing and of Scots language itself, insisting on its worldwide readership and accessibility around the globe. Incensed by the *Athenaeum* reviewer whose notice of Stevenson's *The Weir of Hermiston* complained of difficulties posed by words common to "Scotch Ballads, the Waverley Novels, and Burns's poems," Lang pounced: "If this reviewer really does not understand them, he cannot read, without a glossary, books with which every educated man is supposed to be familiar." The problem was not Scottish particularity but the reviewer's own insufficient cosmopolitanism. Lang was so incensed that he kept it up for another page and a half, noting that many Scots words were originally English. Then he returned to his position that Scottish literature was world literature: "It is ridiculous to pretend, in the face of facts, that educated 'Southrons' do not read and appreciate Scott, Burns, and the Ballads. All of these circulate,

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<sup>18</sup> Lang, "At the Sign of the Ship," *Longman's Magazine*, 19 (April 1892): 684-9.



and for eighty years have circulated, very widely, south of the Tweed.” And the millions of copies of Burns, ballads and Scott still circulating seemed likely to be replicated, Lang opined, in the popularity of Scottish authors like J. M. Barrie and Stevenson. As he concluded,

reviewers really need not affect ignorance: they have such quantities of the genuine article. However, if they will insist on averring that they review Scotch novels in ignorance of Scotch, Latin essays in ignorance of Latin, and translations from Greek in ignorance of Greek, we can only say that it is time for them to receive the homely compliment of the sack.<sup>19</sup>

Not only is Lang maintaining that Scottish literature is world literature; its Scots language is classical, on a par with Latin and Greek. While elsewhere in his causeries Lang’s discursive Scottish cosmopolitanism is enacted or performed implicitly, this example reveals it as a conscious and explicit feature of his writing.

I conclude with a column on the cusp of the new century that brought together many of the elements discussed to this point. Lang began by enacting the print discursive cosmopolitanism through which Scotland entered the larger world of letters and thought both in and out of Lang’s column. On one of his jaunts to the French Riviera, Lang picked up the English journal *Macmillan’s Magazine* and was thereby transported back to the Scottish highlands through William Black’s *The Princess of Thule* serialized in the rival magazine; echoing the novel’s words, Lang asserted that by reading them he himself “beheld the Hebrides” in his mind with the Highlands in his heart, alluding to “The Canadian Boat-Song.” Here space and time at once collapsed into a single intense moment of transnational consciousness, yet also exploded outward across landscapes seen in what was past and present simultaneously. This vivid opening scene was by way of announcing Black’s death and Lang’s remembrances of him as writer and friend. His recollection in particular of a fishing trip the two took together in Scotland reprised Lang’s other mentions of personal experiences in Scotland that dot earlier “Ships,” and he offered the more personal revelation of his versus Black’s competing styles of angling. Yet this remembrance of friendship past also included the longer past of Scottish history, so frequent an element of Lang’s “Ships,” in the reference to the site where “Montrose met his last defeat.” This led to a further paragraph on Scottish personages and places, including Scott and the late Lord Napier as well as Stirling Castle and its historical associations.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Lang, “At the Sign of the Ship,” *Longman’s Magazine*, 28 (July 1896): 320-22.

<sup>20</sup> Lang, “At the Sign of the Ship,” *Longman’s Magazine*, 33 (February 1899): 376-78.

Lang then mentally journeyed outward from Scotland and personal reminiscence to London books, cookery, and French taste in current English authors (nugatory, Lang asserted, since the French had *no* interest in them). He managed to work in yet another reference to Thackeray and Stevenson, as well as the recently published *Scottish Vernacular Literature*, which Lang warmly endorsed, followed by mentions of Continental ghost tales. Perhaps the mention of Scots vernacular prompted his final prose comments in the column, which encompassed once more his assertion that Scottishness traveled (albeit by way of a highly ambivalent stance on “savages”):

Mr. Darwin very condescendingly says that when the Fuegians ... had learned a little English, he found that they ‘resembled us in most of their mental faculties.’ In all of our mental faculties, I make no doubt.<sup>21</sup> But the point is that they excelled Mr. Darwin in one mental faculty. They could learn English; he could not learn Fuegian. Nor could he, for the dear life of him, learn German; and my mental faculties are not much higher than those of Mr. Darwin. Some German works of learning I can make a shift to master, others defy me; and among these, I fear, is the book of Dr. Schleich [*Palæstra*], or at least its German part. What a people are the Germans! They take up even Scots vernacular literature. How few Englishmen get beyond Mr. Barrie; and how they can translate Mr. Barrie and not translate Scott is a great mystery.<sup>22</sup>

From first to last, even as Lang proved himself a versatile world bookman and transnational collector of “bric-a-brac,” he discursively mapped for his readers the mental journeys a truly cosmopolitan mind could undertake. At the same time, the examples and passages that I have explored show how careful he was to place Scotland *in* the world within a cosmopolitan globality; they show Lang asserting Scotland’s centrality to literate readers north and south, east and west, and its cultural importance as a player on the world stage.

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<sup>21</sup> As Michael Shaw points out, “Lang believed that ‘we are all savages under our white skins,’” and he valued romance because “the genre revealed the barbarism that lies within all societies and people. Lang even uncouples the binary between realism and romance, suggesting that the division is simply a reflection of the Victorians’ inability to confront the fact that they were simultaneously civilised and barbarous” (Shaw, *Scottish Revival*, 74, 36). Shaw quotes from Lang’s dedication to H. Rider Haggard, *In the Wrong Paradise* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co., 1886), v. See also Sumpter, “Devulgarizing Dickens,” 735, 740, and Donaldson, as in n. 3 above, 157, 165.

<sup>22</sup> Lang, “At the Sign of the Ship,” *Longman’s Magazine*, 33 (February 1899): 379–83.