



Grieving Cosmopolitanism in Middle East Studies

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Abstract

Political philosophers and cultural theorists studying twenty-first-century globalization have found cosmopolitanism to be a productive concept. In Middle East scholarship, however, cosmopolitanism has been less than effective. This review illustrates three characteristics of cosmopolitanism in Middle East historiography – elitism in formulation and content, grieving nostalgia, and the privileging of formal labels over content – with examples from nineteenth-century cities and globalized metropolises. Scholars must confront the anti-nationalist teleology and secularizing, bourgeois fantasy at the heart of cosmopolitanism as it is currently used if they are to produce more accurate accounts of diversity in Middle East societies past and present.

Cosmopolitanism is a mainstay of writing about the past and present of the Middle East. The term is generally used in two complementary senses. First, it designates moments (in time and space) of ‘tremendous ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity’.¹ Second, ‘cosmopolitan’ is cast as the opposite of ‘national’ or ‘nationalist’. These two simple senses do not reflect the breadth of the large literature on cosmopolitanism that exists outside the field, which scholars of the Middle East have done little to engage. The concept is impoverished as a result. Cosmopolitanism has clouded rather than clarified Middle East scholarship in at least three ways. First, the concept has been reserved for elites. Second, reference to cosmopolitanism consistently entails nostalgia for a more tolerant past, along with grief over modern-day Middle Eastern states and societies. Neither of these characteristics is necessarily problematic if acknowledged; in practice, however, assent to these elitist and presentist premises is simply (and often unconsciously) presumed. These tacit premises result in a third, functional characteristic: cosmopolitanism serves as a tag, a reflexive, generic piece of shorthand that promises to draw together and organize scholarly interventions when in fact it camouflages productive differences.

In recent scholarship outside of Middle East studies, cosmopolitanism plays an especially active role in two fields: political philosophy and cultural studies. The political philosophy literature traces its modern roots to Emmanuel Kant, whose sense of cosmopolitanism comprised a universalist ethic,

tightly connected to a project of perpetual international peace.² During the twentieth century, as the nation-state became universal political currency, interest in Kant's thought about indifference to nationality was muted. More recently, however, political philosophers interested in globalization and multiculturalism (two key challenges to the dominance of the nation-state) have returned to the question of cosmopolitanism.³ Some scholars use cosmopolitanism to explore political counterparts to economic globalization, while others use it (in preference to 'transnational' or 'international') to rescue liberalism from its reliance on the nation-state.⁴ In both contexts, the question of democracy is prominent, with certain scholars considering world government the best goal of cosmopolitanism, while others advocate more limited forms of membership in a global commons.⁵ This set of preoccupations has influenced writing about cosmopolitanism in other fields, but has had little noticeable impact on Middle East studies.

Recent approaches to cosmopolitanism in the field of cultural studies are related to (and often in direct conversation with) this resurgence of philosophical interest, not least because cultural studies is also animated by globalization and multiculturalism. Notable interventions over the last decade come from flagship journals of the field: the *Social Text* collective produced a volume entitled *Cosmopolitics* in 1998, and an issue of *Public Culture* devoted to 'Cosmopolitanisms' outside of Europe appeared in 2000.⁶ A who's-who of scholars – including Arjun Appadurai, Homi Bhabha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, David Harvey, and Walter D. Mignolo – has weighed in on the question, seeking to make of cosmopolitanism a tool for global, macro, translocal, deterritorialized 'transnational cultural studies'.⁷ Although the tenor of this scholarship is closer than that of the political philosophers to the typical concerns of Middle East historians, the influence of this work on Middle East studies has also been limited.

But while Middle East scholarship has passed over this outpouring, scholars of cosmopolitanism in politics and culture have been making use of the Middle East. Most cosmopolitanism in the European and American past (such as the 'prevailing indifference to nationality and citizenship' of Ancien Régime aristocrats)⁸ bears the wrong political valency for theorists seeking historical examples to support their contentions. Peter Van der Veer has argued that cosmopolitanism is essentially a component of colonial modernity, and that the concept is trumpeted without any critical sense of this fact.⁹ It follows that Anthony Appiah's invocation of a (reassuringly unfamiliar) African setting is one reason for the positive reception of his work on cosmopolitanism.¹⁰ The Middle Eastern past appears to offer another palatable substitute setting and safe throwaway reference. The Ottoman example – an apparently diverse society, with a *lingua franca* and the like – is the principal Middle Eastern case cited in discussions of cosmopolitanism. In his important essay on 'The Class Consciousness of Frequent Fliers', for example, Craig Calhoun states that 'the Ottoman Empire offered a high point of cosmopolitanism'.¹¹ In a different context (the introduction to a

recent historical collection about globalization), the prominent historian of empire A. G. Hopkins writes: 'it is worth noting, if not too wistfully, that under other circumstances Ottoman cosmopolitanism would have been well suited to the needs of globalization'.¹² The Ottoman example is not unique: philosopher Jonathan Rée praises the Egypt of Amitav Ghosh's *In an Antique Land* as an example of cosmopolitanism without nationality.¹³

In the pages that follow, I will suggest that discussions of cosmopolitanism in Middle Eastern history have thus far offered little that might confirm or deny the role that the region has been assigned in broader discussions of cosmopolitanism. As used in the historiography of the Middle East, cosmopolitanism is a particular, European, literate, bourgeois perspective; it is not universal. Other cosmopolitanisms *are* possible (as İlay Örs has argued in an important discussion of Ottoman coffeehouses), and certain Middle East pasts seem to offer materials for the credible histories of diversity so needed in the present day.¹⁴ Thus far, however, historians have not sought to measure the cosmopolitanism of Middle Eastern societies or even to fix criteria for such an investigation. Instead, they have reproduced a conventional picture of Middle Eastern cosmopolitanism that is characterized by three features: it is elitist in formulation and content, it is laced with grief, and it privileges formal labels over content. When scholars of the Middle East begin to engage the concept with the seriousness of those in other fields, they will overcome these stumbling blocks, produce better history, and offer something to the broader debate.

Cosmopolitanism in Middle East Studies

The major languages of the Middle East contain no simple equivalent for 'cosmopolitanism' other than the Greek loan word *kosmopolitēs*, transmitted via French – *kuzmubalitanıya* in Arabic, *kozmpolitlik* in Turkish. The imported term has only recently become naturalized in elite and scholarly Middle Eastern circles. Earlier bilingual dictionaries describe cosmopolitanism in terms of world citizenship (*al-wataniya al-'alamiya* or *sha'i' al-watan; dūnya vatandaşı*), universal perspective (*'alami ghair mahalli*), freedom from prejudice (*mutaharrir min al-ahqad al-qawmiya; ulusal özelliğini yitirmiş kimse*). Dictionaries translating from French give another shade of meaning, about travel and mobility (*sa'ih, rahhalah, mutajawwil*). Only rarely is the word given a sense closer to its common usage in Middle East studies, such as 'a man free from chauvinism' (*rajul khal min ruh al-ta'assub*).¹⁵ Cosmopolitanism was not an actor's category until the end of the twentieth century. In a celebrated critique of the concept of identity in the social sciences, Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper argue that even if identity is a category of practice, this does not mean that it should be used as a category of analysis.¹⁶ In evaluating cosmopolitanism, we might reverse the terms: just because it has become a category of analysis does not mean that it is a practice, a lived reality, for any but a tiny minority.

Sami Zubaida's descriptions of Middle Eastern cosmopolitanism have been endorsed as representative of the discipline's perspective, most notably by inclusion in *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism* (2003), which is arguably the definitive recent collection on the subject.¹⁷ Zubaida, a sociologist, defines cosmopolitanism as 'deracination from caste, community, and religion'; elsewhere, it is 'ways of living and thinking . . . deracinated from communities and cultures of origin, from conventional living, from family and home-centredness'.¹⁸ He prefers concrete examples to abstract, negative definitions of this type, however. Cosmopolitanism must be embodied to be understood, in persons (with wide cultural interests), milieus (of high culture), and ideologies. Ideologies, in turn, Zubaida folds into personal, social, or spatial settings, thus cosmopolitan religion is that of 'intellectual Sufis . . . [the] Renaissance Church . . . liberated Jews in Europe'.¹⁹

In Zubaida's account, cosmopolitanism is a lifestyle practiced by a familiar genealogy of cosmopolitan individuals in cosmopolitan places: philosophers of the 'Abbasid court (but not its jurists, who sought to narrow horizons), Sufis (Ibn 'Arabi and Rumi are the examples given), Andalusians (here Ibn Rushd and Maimonides are mentioned), and of course Ibn Khaldun, that tireless worker for claim-makers about Arab civilization. In the modern period, the key figures are men sent by modernizing Egyptian and Ottoman states for education in Europe. Along with Christians, Jews, and European visitors (such as Paul Hindemith!), these men made cosmopolitan 'enclaves' in Istanbul, Cairo, and Alexandria. Namik Kemal and especially Jamal al-din al-Afghani are mentioned, the latter 'only a prominent example of this genre of cosmopolitanism that thrived' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁰

This description reveals a problem at the heart of Middle East cosmopolitanism: is it a mental or a material condition? At first, the concept appears to describe a way of thinking or being. But Zubaida's historical sketch of cosmopolitanism depends on concrete associations between the mental condition and certain persons and places. These in turn qualify as cosmopolitan by formal definitions: resumes of languages spoken and places visited serve as (self-evident) qualifications for the title (Afghani 'operated between British India, Iran, Egypt and Turkey, as well as the European capitals and knew Persian, Turkish and Arabic, as well as English and French').²¹ One such qualification is especially intriguing: consumption of alcohol. Drink is mentioned at least six times in Zubaida's nine-page essay: Namik Kemal and Afghani were drinkers; drink is a mark of European corruption for the anti-cosmopolitan Muslim Brotherhood; bars are the point of exclusion of natives in Alexandria, the battleground for Islamists in present-day Turkey, and also the urban space and social milieu of intellectuals and artists. Middle Eastern cosmopolitanism is now to be found in the bars and cafés of London and Paris, not the repressed and repressive Middle East.²² What could be the meaning of this insistence?

Cosmopolitanism is a long word that is shorthand for wealth and secularism, both of which are signaled (in the context of Islam) by consumption of alcohol. Elitism is confirmed by the lifestyles of Zubaida's cosmopolitans – their mobility, polyglossia, and class are qualifications of form, not content. It seems odd that Zubaida would describe Afghani, perhaps the most singular character in nineteenth-century Middle Eastern history, as exemplary. As it happens, however, cosmopolitanism is a category of exception for Zubaida: it is the opposite of 'conventional living'.²³ Cosmopolitan 'milieux' are created at 'breaks' in 'religio-communal boundaries', that is to say 'milieus and means of communication outside communal and religious authority, in which individuals from diverse backgrounds and cultures can participate'.²⁴ In the structure Zubaida describes, the cosmopolitan exception demands a non-cosmopolitan rule, a 'conventional' majority represented by the Muslim Brotherhood, present-day Islamists, and the largest part of the population. Popularity cheapens and ruins cosmopolitanism, which is exclusive by nature.

Although the plebian majority is necessary to the existence of the cosmopolitan elite, its preponderance is an occasion for grief and nostalgia for a lost age. Zubaida concludes that the old cosmopolitan milieux have been overwhelmed by 'recently urbanized masses' and the homogeneous globalized culture of international capital. In the present day, the opposite of cosmopolitanism is 'nationalist and religious xenophobia'.²⁵ Zubaida is aware that cosmopolitanism is a nostalgic exercise – he mentions Ferid Boughedir's 1996 film *Un été à la Goulette* as an example of memory as protest against the 'xenophobia and (hypocritical) Puritanism of nationalism and then Islamism, which brought this *idealized* cosmopolitanism to an end'.²⁶ This characterization of the film's political message is accurate, but the medium of critique – a fiction of sunny beaches, sleep and food, female adolescent beauty under male gaze, and of course schematic sectarian conviviality – is of no practical or ideological value. While one might deplore the influence of nationalism and sectarianism, the cosmopolitanism that Zubaida describes hardly offers a credible alternative. Without better truth-claims than Boughedir's fantasy or obscure exceptions, like Cairo's hard-drinking, Bartok-loving elite of the 1930's, Middle East cosmopolitanism remains an obscure fantasy.

Zubaida's general description, then, displays elitism and grieving nostalgia, two limitations key to Middle East cosmopolitanism. But what work does the concept do in more focused application? In the pages that follow, I will pursue two settings prominent in Zubaida and the Euro-American historiography of the Middle East: port cities of the nineteenth and early twentieth century (with specific reference to Alexandria) and global cities of the twenty-first century (with specific reference to Cairo). Other settings – Al-Andalus, contemporary transnational Islam, and especially the Indian Ocean – merit more discussion than they will receive here.²⁷

The Cosmopolitan Port Cities of the Middle East

In an edited collection on empire in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean, Kenneth McPherson makes a useful distinction between two senses of cosmopolitanism: it might designate a place in which people 'adopt and adapt cultural forms drawn from other confessional and national groups' or, more moderately, the term can be used 'simply to denote the presence of a variety of confessional, cultural, and racial groups within a single urban setting'. McPherson prefers the latter sense in describing port cities of the Indian Ocean (his area of expertise), but (in another 'outsider' endorsement of the special cosmopolitan currency of the Middle East) he appears to take at face value the assertion of his Middle East historian colleagues that cosmopolitanism in the former sense was 'frequent' in cities such as Alexandria, Beirut, and Haifa.²⁸

This review article cannot tackle this hypothesis in empirical terms. In historiographic terms, however (and despite McPherson's assurances), there are precious few blended accounts of cultural adaptation in these cities. Instead, historians of the Middle East treat the cities as composites of several discrete communities – Greek, Jewish, Turkish, Arab, French, and so on – each pursuing its own interests, in its own sector of the economy, living in its own quarter of the city.²⁹ Class difference, in these accounts, is subordinate to ethnic and sectarian difference, so Jewish dockworkers belong to the same category as Jewish bankers, and in a different section from lower class workers of other communities. Any episode of agreement between communities, for instance support among the non-Turk bourgeoisie for the Committee of Union and Progress in turn-of-the-century Salonica, is considered temporary and instrumental to community interests. If cosmopolitanism is as simple as adjacency – McPherson's second sense – then these cities were cosmopolitan indeed. But accounts that seek to describe a mixed, cosmopolitan character – McPherson's first sense – tend toward impressionism rather than empirical description. In touting the cosmopolitanism of the cities, these historians succumb to the 'simultaneous adoption of two incompatible assumptions' identified by Khaled Fahmy in the context of Alexandria:

first, that Alexandria was an open, tolerant city where different ethnic groups were allowed to flourish and to coexist peacefully; and, secondly, that these ethnic groups were separate from each other, with little or no interaction between them.³⁰

Alexandria is, in the words of Zubaida, 'the paradigm case of Middle East cosmopolitanism'.³¹ The conventional wisdom that residents of Alexandria enjoyed a shared society of extraordinary diversity, harmony, and fecundity in 'the half-century between 1882 and 1936 [that] was the heyday of cosmopolitan Alexandria' is largely attributable to fiction and poetry, which have 'played an important role in creating and disseminating Alexandria's image as a cosmopolis'.³²

Along with the Alexandria of antiquity, literary Alexandria (especially the work of Constantine Cavafy, E. M. Forster, and Lawrence Durrell) has played a leading role in the city's small industry of nostalgia and celebration.³³ Everywhere in this outpouring of publications, 'cosmopolitan' collocates with 'Alexandria'. The topos migrates from fiction to literary criticism and popular history, and finally to academic history: Robert Ilbert, Alexandria's greatest historian, refers to Durrell forty one times in his *magnum opus*.³⁴ Films such as *Fatma wa Marika wa Rachel* (a 1949 comedy about romance across sectarian lines in Alexandria) suggest cosmopolitan possibilities, and descriptions of everyday dealings between members of different communities are a trope of memoirs both European and Egyptian. Evidence from memoirs, film, and literature is always relevant, but never sufficient, to social history. Histories of Middle East cosmopolitanism must depend on more conventional sources, such as administrative, economic, and legal records.

Recent scholarship pointing out the limited scope of the most famous literary descriptions of Alexandria further destabilizes historians' reliance on such sources.³⁵ Alexandria's cosmopolitanism is a cosmopolitanism of the few: this field of writing amplifies the experience of a tiny group of elites and broadcasts it across the whole of a heterogeneous social past. Conventional sources for the history of Alexandria – books, newspapers, letters, and memoirs – announce and record social interactions of the wealthy and privileged. The poor are not just ignored in such histories: they are excluded. Khaled Fahmy argues that 'the openness and cosmopolitanism of Alexandria, much celebrated by novelists, poets and historians alike, is essentially predicated on ignoring and silencing the city's Arabic-speaking population'.³⁶ Most critics who note the distaste for and especially absence of Arabic-speakers in such accounts seek to restore balance to the cosmopolitan city by adding Arabic novels to the canon.³⁷ I would go further and say that accounts of cosmopolitan Alexandria *require* a margin of 'lower class' Europeans and Egyptians in order to make a certain category of foreigners the social centre of the city. The essential characteristic of the center is belonging, while the margin is unimportant, alien, foreign:

As in the ancient Hellenistic city, so in the refounded Alexandria of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the 'foreign' population were the simpler Egyptians, immigrants off the land who were drawn to the city by the economic activity of its overseas founders whose culture they hardly shared.³⁸

According to this inversion, from Michael Haag's *Alexandria: City of Memory* (2004), the foreign margin of 'simpler Egyptians' comprised eighty percent of the city's population. The poor are excluded a priori: the maid from upper Egypt who has learned to speak Greek, for example, is never cast as a cosmopolitan, though she has met cosmopolitanism's classic criteria of polyglossia and migration.³⁹

Cosmopolitanism is a blanket that masks social indeterminacy, concealing more than it reveals, even in the hands of the most careful historians. The

most detailed, archive-based histories of the city, those of Robert Ilbert and Michael Reimer, use the concept to stretch the experience of a European elite over the whole of the city's social history.⁴⁰ The hold of the cosmopolitan image over Alexandria's history is reproduced in other Middle Eastern settings. The label meets audience expectations and functions to situate scholarship schematically, but requires Middle Eastern history to conform to a received image while offering little analytical insight in return. Recent articles by Keith Watenpaugh and Marc Baer, two prominent representatives of the rising generation of Middle Eastern historians, illustrate this case. Cosmopolitanism does most of its work in the titles of their essays ('Cleansing the Cosmopolitan City: Historicism, Journalism and the Arab Nation in the Post-Ottoman Eastern Mediterranean' and 'Globalization, Cosmopolitanism, and the *Dönme* in Ottoman Salonica and Turkish Istanbul') by sending familiar signals about the Middle East to the readers of the journals (*Social History* and *The Journal of World History*) in which they were published.

Watenpaugh traces the propagation of Arab nationalist sentiment among Aleppo's 'reading class' through a close reading of the city's official gazette *Halab* in the year 1919. He faithfully cites actors' language and categories to describe the discovery of nationality in the years before 1919, arguing forcefully that the Aleppine sense of nationality was an invention cobbled together from a variety of modern sources. In describing what was 'lost' in the years of nationalism that followed, Watenpaugh resorts to cosmopolitanism, and the tag does his contrastive work effectively: the 1919 watershed is clear.⁴¹ But the Aleppine bourgeoisie, which constantly wrote about nationalism, did not write about cosmopolitanism. Watenpaugh *shows* us the nationalism discourse that won out, but he can only *tell* us about the cosmopolitanism that was lost, because this label for the nebulous social and political character of the pre-national period cannot be supported with positive evidence. This qualitative difference reveals how rigor is sacrificed when the concept is invoked. Writing about the same time and place, Bruce Masters reserves 'cosmopolitanism' for the city's Rome-facing Catholic community, and qualifies it as 'imagined'.⁴² Watenpaugh, too, shows more caution in the book associated with his article, using the (more fitting) terms 'modern' and 'middle class' in its title, and 'cosmopolitan' as a synonym for 'polyglot' in the text itself.⁴³

Like Watenpaugh's actors, the cosmopolitans in Baer's study of Salonica's *dönme* ('descendants of seventeenth-century Jewish converts to Islam') were bourgeois; based on qualifications restricted to a few of its inhabitants, the whole city becomes 'cosmopolitan Salonica'.⁴⁴ Baer shows real familiarity with cosmopolitan theory, but he cannot find a place for the concept in his argument.⁴⁵ Instead, he substitutes globalization (which is not the same thing), arguing that the late nineteenth and early twentieth century *dönme* community of Salonica forms a part of the lost prehistory of globalization models so obvious in the present day. Whatever the merits of this argument,

the conceptual move is significant: globalization has greater analytical purchase than cosmopolitanism.⁴⁶ Finally, Baer's account is animated by grief over the loss of Salonica's nineteenth-century cosmopolitan, 'globalized' moment.⁴⁷ This loss is domestic – the city fell into provincialism as the Greek and Turkish nation-states wrestled after World War I – as well as international:

If only the *dönme* had been allowed to bridge the Aegean and serve as a link between Turkey and Europe, Turkey's current bid to become a full member of the European Union may not have been so difficult.⁴⁸

Henk Driessen has shown that loss is a general trope in the history of Mediterranean port city cosmopolitanism.⁴⁹ If the 1922–1923 Greek/Turkish population exchange is one key occasion for grief, the waves of national homogenization following the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948 and 1967 were a still greater tragedy.⁵⁰ Discussion of lost cosmopolitan pasts is often embellished with disappointed testimony about visits to the present day Middle East. Consider this narrative of personal witness of the loss of cosmopolitanism in the present day, which appears at the end of Maya Jasanoff's recent article about eighteenth-century Alexandria:

Only two generations ago, you would have been hard-pressed to find Arabic-speakers in certain parts of central Alexandria. Now it felt as if I was the only foreigner to spend more than a night there. Imagine London or New York without their ethnic communities . . . That was a bit how Alexandria seemed now . . . The cosmopolitan cityscape remains, inhabited by a largely homogeneous 'native' population.⁵¹

These lines present a curious quintet of ideas that feature in many such accounts: unsupported (and unsupported) assertions about the past ('you would have been hard-pressed to find Arabic-speakers in certain parts of central Alexandria'), anecdotes of personal, present-day experience ('I was the only foreigner'), mourning of change over time ('Only two generations ago'), occupation of the site by an undifferentiated Arab crowd ('a largely homogenous "native" population') and vaunting of Western multiculturalism ('Imagine London or New York without their ethnic communities').⁵² Surprisingly, many of the same tropes of colonial nostalgia appear in a set of ruminations on Alexandria that Edward Said wrote for the American Express magazine *Departures*.⁵³

Can elitist, racist, Eurocentric cosmopolitan be rehabilitated? John Rodenbeck, who savages Durrell, seems to think so, and tries to salvage an Alexandrian cosmopolitanism,

mainly working-class, like most of the modern city's real population; and . . . cosmopolitan only in the truly Alexandrian sense, that of being a place where many different ethnic communities have incidentally made their homes at the same time, living otherwise more or less separately from one another, none feeling permanently installed.⁵⁴

Likewise, Khaled Fahmy's resounding two-part critique of Alexandria's cosmopolitan image (which contains many points made here) opens and

closes with grief: 'This wonderfully rich, open and tolerant city is, alas, no more; the rabid nationalism of the 1940s has killed it'.⁵⁵ In the midst of trenchant critiques, Rodenbeck and Fahmy endorse the cosmopolitan dream reflexively and in spite of themselves. But they lack firm evidence of the past they grieve – it is only the obverse of their hope for a better future.⁵⁶ The Middle Eastern present is so bleak that we cannot help but be engrossed by the cosmopolitan mirage. It behooves us to remember the less than cheerful possibility that cosmopolitanism itself is essentially exclusionary. It was Georg Simmel who noted that cosmopolitanism is 'quasi-colonial', and this characteristic becomes obvious tracing the career of the concept in histories of port cities, where cosmopolitanism has become a category of conformity.⁵⁷

Cosmopolitanism in the Global Cities of the Modern Middle East

Cosmopolitanism also engenders historiographic conformity. In edited collections, the tag can be used to unite disparate contributions, as in the 2006 volume *Cairo Cosmopolitan*. This lively array of solid studies considers the city on various scales, always firmly engaged with the politics of the present day. The collection benefits from the varied disciplinary and national locations of its contributors, who are affiliated with (among others) American, French, and Egyptian institutions. In their introduction, the editors assert a strong collective identity for the contributors, calling the group the 'New Cairo School of Urban Studies'.⁵⁸ In this context, the selection of 'cosmopolitan' as the organizing rubric, and individual contributors' efforts to bring their chapters in line with this concept, bears closer attention. The term is chosen for its apparent power to gather disparate elements under a single banner, and it is to this power that the collective resorts again and again in the pages that follow.

In the introduction, the editors work to define their kind of cosmopolitanism. First come disavowals: cosmopolitanism has 'often been embedded in transnationalist, normative, universalist, and imperialist discourses', but the collective will avoid heritage cosmopolitanism (modern villas imitating fin-de-siècle styles), multicultural nostalgia, and Gulf petro-state globalism (characterized by an anti-Islamist, anti-citizenship Islamic aesthetic), as well as Kant's universalist humanitarian global community.⁵⁹ The editors then offer their constructive agenda. Although in present-day Egypt, exclusive kinds of cosmopolitanism (of 'Euro-cosmopolitan solidarity') are 'stronger than ever', the authors detect another possibility: 'new forms of cosmopolitanism in the Middle East are crawling back to the margins of the public sphere in the shape of subversive, grounded, fierce world-weary articulations', aware of interdependence and embeddedness in universal economic and legal orders. After it has been 'reworked through critical scholarship and public action, cosmopolitanism may inform an emancipatory counter-ethic beyond the limits of nationalism, fear, and narrow identity politics'.⁶⁰

But what does this really mean? Where are these 'more vernacular, less elitist, non-Eurocentric cosmopolitanisms' to be found? The authors offer a few nods to the broader literature: Fanon via Bhabha, Paul Gilroy, and others. The most convincing of these descriptions of what they call 'cosmopolitanism from below' draws on Walter Mignolo's idea of conviviality. It is only in the closing pages of the introduction that the editors offer a version of what they mean:

strategies to re-write Egyptian identity are not portrayed as local responses to the global or national, but as themselves enmeshed in transnational processes, national popular movements and state factions, and urban geopolitics.⁶¹

As in the bilingual dictionaries and Zubaida, the appeal of a single-word substitute for such involved definitions is obvious. But 'cosmopolitanism' cannot be trusted to safeguard all of these nuances. As a slogan, cosmopolitan is effective. As a tool, whether theoretical or methodological, it is rather more clumsy. Crucially, the authors do not perform the promised reworking in the pages that follow, and this volume can hardly be considered a contribution to the broader literature on cosmopolitanism. The unreconstructed concept provides an ill-fitting organizing rubric, obliging contributors to make the same term mean different things.

The best use of cosmopolitanism in this collection comes in Anouk de Koning's article 'Café Latte and Caesar Salad: Cosmopolitan Belonging in Cairo's Coffee Shops'. Her careful observation of social practice at Cairo's elite cafés reveals 'explicitly cosmopolitan styles' and 'distinctive cosmopolitan lifestyles'.⁶² It turns out that what is explicit and distinctive is nothing as broad or grandiose as cosmopolitanism, however; de Koning's fine reading of the 'transnational formula of the coffee shop' shows that all signals point to America.⁶³ By showing that these 'spaces of cosmopolitan belonging' are characterized only by class segregation and mixed gender sociability, de Koning (perhaps unintentionally) demonstrates that cosmopolitanism is a thin practice, a weak tag pointing to two simple social processes: celebration of wealth and abandonment of tradition (including religion), demonstrated in this case by gender mixing in public.

A coherent approach to cosmopolitanism as a colonial condition could offer much to three essays about conservation of built heritage in the context of global markets of tourism and investment. In a plea to protect Islamic Cairo from decay on the one hand and shoddy tarting-up for tourists under a 'cosmetic veneer' on the other, Caroline Williams raises a difficult question: what do local tastes really want in this global market?⁶⁴ While Cairo's self-presentation for the global tourist market raises issues of globalization, it is the reaction of residents of the area, who are untroubled by the cosmetic makeovers that horrify preservationists, that is truly interesting. Here (as in de Koning), cosmopolitanism appears, warts and all, as a real maker of hierarchies. In 'Belle-époque Cairo: The Politics of Refurbishing the Downtown Business District', Galila El Kadi and Dalila ElKerdany

also confront the apparent disinterest of unc cosmopolitan, non-elite locals in preserving the built environment. They describe a process of 'heritization', in which

A new coalition of preservationists has manufactured a resurgent, generalized nostalgia for a previously unvalued period – now relabeled 'Cairo's belle époque.' This campaign selectively ignores the foreign hegemony of the period 1870–1952 and, instead, reidentifies this time as a golden age of urbane, liberal, cosmopolitan Arab creativity, grounded in the art deco, art nouveau, French Empire, Arabesque modern, and neo-Orientalist structures of Cairo's downtown villas, theaters, cafés, shops, and institutions.⁶⁵

The opening pages of the essay maintain the same tone of skepticism concerning contrived nostalgia. The authors seem to doubt the whole premise of redefining an urban landscape to suit coffee table picture books. Partway through the article, however, something shifts, perhaps due to an author change. The article closes on a nationalist note, with a plea for private sector gentrification – another thin, elite form of cosmopolitanism – as key to the future triumph of the Egyptian spirit.⁶⁶ Eric Denis situates the gated communities at Cairo's perimeter, also built with private capital, in the context of 'neo-liberal' stigmatization of the street, social exclusion, and the 'new hybridized, globalized Americo-Mediterranean lifestyle'.⁶⁷ He then expresses longing for the values of the 'European, cosmopolitan global city': although it is 'mythic, elitist, and ethnocentric', it is preferable to these gated communities, where the 'object of new urban policies is to struggle against combinations of incongruous elements, eliminate diversity, and criminalize density, melange, and proximity' – the very principles that the capitals of modernity were supposed to (but did not) possess.⁶⁸ While each of these three essays engages the colonial heart of cosmopolitanism, none pursues it to its end.

If cosmopolitanism shows its critical limits in these most promising interventions, it all but disappears from the rest of the book. Vignal and Denis's essay on Cairo's place in the regional and global economy and Elsheshtawy's comparison of Cairo and Dubai perform the same substitution as Baer (discussed above), finding it most effective to treat cosmopolitanism as though it were identical to globalization. Although a scan of the political philosophy literature quickly shows that the terms are not identical, the choice to use them as synonyms proves sound, because cosmopolitanism itself offers little analytical purchase in the contexts that these authors explore. Wiser still are contributors who simply set cosmopolitanism and its burdens aside, as Farha Ghannam does in her excellent contribution concerning globalization as reflected through the letters and taped messages of an Egyptian worker in the Gulf. While the subject of her research might appear cosmopolitan due to his mobility, he does not have a warrant to the term because he is too poor and not Western enough. The same is true of Yasser Elsheshtawy's chapter on public spaces at al-Rifa'i Mosque and Sultan

Hasan Square and the three closing chapters, on mulids, the Giza Zoo, and the musicians of Muhammad 'Ali Street. Because these fine studies concern non-elite Egyptians mixing with other non-elite Egyptians, there is no place for cosmopolitanism as it is formulated in Middle East studies. In the introduction, the editors refer specifically to the analytical contribution made by a cluster of chapters that describe how rural Egyptians (including Nubians, Copts, and Upper Egyptians) assert themselves in 'sub-national' but transnational ways in the city. These chapters are indeed exciting, but cosmopolitanism (as conventionally understood) is so insistently urban that it does not fit when the foreignness that migrants bring to the city is rural.

Perhaps it is cosmopolitan's subversive resonances which prove most useful in *Cairo Cosmopolitan*. An introductory section on the vision and method of 'the Cairo School' entitled 'Grounded Projects and Rooftop Plots' situates the collective's work in space: its members gather on 'hotel rooftop cafés in the heart of downtown Cairo'.⁶⁹ Beyond the means of ordinary Cairenes, these places are peopled by political activists and foreign correspondents, not just gray academics. The café setting, indispensable to the public sphere, is a truth-claim. Cosmopolitans are cast as romantic figures, heroic and embattled, facing almost overwhelming repression from the globalizing, liberal elite regime running Egypt: 'A war-time form of rebel cosmopolitanism had sparked to life in Cairo'.⁷⁰ The collective insists on the influence of the 2003–5 oppositional moment in Egypt, during which 'Protest groups were making *explicit cosmopolitan claims* on the government, demanding accountability, legality and respect for human rights'.⁷¹ But what does 'cosmopolitan' mean in this context? Perhaps it refers to cooperation within the opposition between rich and poor, liberals and *Ikhwan*, but 'cosmopolitan' is hardly a native category for *Kifaya*. For the 'Cairo School', meanwhile, it functions as signal rather than method.

Conclusion

To recapitulate: in writing about the Middle East, cosmopolitanism is characterized by a particular scope (focus on elites), a particular approach (invocation of a tag rather than pursuit of an idea), and a particular tone (grieving nostalgia). Existing interventions fail to provide a satisfying account of diversity, and the critique of nationalism that they entail is reflexive rather than creative. Evidence of social diversity in the modern Middle East is found in literature, memoir, and film more easily than in historiography. Historians have not provided the means to measure cosmopolitanism or to evaluate the claims and respond to the needs of non-specialists interested in diversity. How might we address this problem?

One approach is to scale back cosmopolitanism's analytical ambition by limiting the purview of the concept. Cosmopolitanism as used in Middle Eastern history is restricted: political, linguistic, and social boundaries are crossed, but only by an elite. 'Actually existing cosmopolitanism' is all

about wealth and secularism; the poor and the religious, whatever their qualifications of geographical mobility or polyglossia, need not apply. Many scholars who engage cosmopolitanism demonstrate awareness of this restricted scope. Unfortunately, brief acknowledgment of the problem does little to settle the issue: scholarship that passes over the majority must provide special justification, and it is difficult to discern what particular value cosmopolitanism offers that warrants the exclusion of most of Middle East societies past and present. The solution in this approach is to cease to claim any general explanatory power for cosmopolitanism. Elites and exceptional individuals obviously deserve scholarly attention, and existing notions of cosmopolitanism (so long as they acknowledge their limited scope) can provide satisfactory accounts of certain such lives. A recent study of nationalism in Tagore and Yeats uses the concept of cosmopolitanism successfully because it does not overextend claims: it applies it to men who were affluent and geographically mobile.⁷² This sort of use also works in the Middle East context. Marshall Hodgson, for example, uses cosmopolitanism as a matter-of-fact label for the sophistication and refinement ('urbanity') of certain Muslims circulating through the medieval world of Islam.⁷³ Engseng Ho's *Graves of Tarim* is a study of the Hadrami community in the Indian Ocean over five centuries, in which he works to resolve the migrant's problem of attachment and adaptation to local place while maintaining bonds with elsewhere. Ho seeks to bring together different geographical scales, exemplified by men he calls local cosmopolitans: 'persons who, while embedded in local relations, also maintain connections with distant places'.⁷⁴ Offspring of Hadrami fathers and local mothers (and wealthy, like all cosmopolitans), they are locals in language, dress, and diet, but cosmopolitans in religion and genealogy. Crucially, however, the Indian Ocean in which they live does not become a 'cosmopolitan sea'. Neither Hodgson nor Ho commits the error of generalizing the experiences of the few over the many.

The critical step in this revision of cosmopolitanism in Middle East studies is to call groups by their proper names. Elites can be called elites. Other categories for which cosmopolitanism is a stand-in – the list might include Westernizers, liberalizers, secularists, city-dwellers, migrants, exiles, women living public lives, polyglots, neo-liberal capitalists, the formally-educated, 'multiculturals', and European nationals resident in the Middle East – should be taken out of their cosmopolitan clothing and given attention on their own terms. Anti-nationalism or concerns about the tragedy of Arab politics or popular threats to high culture should be called what they are, and need not masquerade as nostalgia for an imagined past. Specificity is important because histories of cosmopolitanism are also social commentary, (often) reflecting historians' and readers' nostalgia for imagined utopias of social mixing in the past and their desire for some similar future. Skepticism about fuzzy histories can give way to cynicism. In order to preserve a dream of social mixing, it is important to be precise about

its precedents, even if precision makes the past appear less rosy and its cosmopolitanism less widespread.

The alternative to this narrowed scope for Middle East cosmopolitanism is to renovate and expand the concept. As understood by most political philosophers, cosmopolitanism is universal by definition.⁷⁵ This use cannot be reconciled with the exclusive picture of cosmopolitanism in the historical literature just surveyed. But if Middle East cosmopolitanism is no longer made to be a stand-in for elitism, the possibility of an inclusive cosmopolitanism, one that can interact with the broader theoretical literature, begins to emerge. Unencumbered by nostalgia for a cosmopolitan past that included only a few, we begin to detect overlap and connection and mobility along other circuits. Much of the best work on cosmopolitanism argues that there are multiple cosmopolitanisms.⁷⁶ To privilege its bourgeois Western secular version is to deny those who, like the illiterate laborer who knows the exchange rates between the four kinds of currency he holds in his pockets, should also be given credit for cosmopolitan sophistication.

Even in this more expansive undertaking, definition of terms remains crucial. A research project directed by Ulrike Freitag and Nora Lafi at Berlin's Zentrum Moderner Orient does just this: the project focuses on the precise historical question of 'governance of diversity'.⁷⁷ This framework is inclusive, even as it shows (as Henk Driessen has argued) that cosmopolitanism might best be understood as a mundane administrative practice rather than a sublime ideal.⁷⁸ As well, the project insists on combining empirical and theoretical approaches, in an effort to engage the broader literature on politics and cosmopolitanism. This approach can immediately focus on elaboration and correction of that literature. For instance, Calhoun's assertion that 'cosmopolitanism flourished in Ottoman Istanbul and old-regime Paris partly because in neither were members of different cultures and communities invited to organize government together' is contradicted by the case of Alexandria, governed by a coalition of all its national communities.⁷⁹

Research into the thorny question of identity offers another place to start. Middle Eastern identities are usually treated as fixed and absolute, whether one is a cosmopolitan or a xenophobe. These descriptions prove unsatisfactory for any purpose other than appropriation of caricature to support political programs. The broader literature on cosmopolitanism proposes alternatives that deserve testing in a Middle Eastern context. Louis Wirth's idea of 'temporary identification', in which 'cosmopolitans' fit the role of the place where they are at each moment (worker at work, father at home, Christian at church, consumer at shops) offers one way out of absolute identities.⁸⁰ Stuart Hall's idea of hybridity, in which people lose something of one identity in assuming others, offers a different solution.⁸¹ Hall's acceptance of natural identity loss attenuates the sense of tragedy that pervades Middle East cosmopolitanism.

Fantasy clings to scholarly and popular accounts of the Middle East. If the cosmopolitan fantasy is more kindly than the Orientalist fantasies of generations past, it is just as necessary that it be confronted. Historians' use of cosmopolitanism reproduces an old pattern in European traditions of nostalgia, exile, and memoir; when Peter Fritzsche writes that 'Long after the [French] revolution, literate Europeans returned again and again to the particular circumstances of counter-revolutionaries, because these seemed pertinent and poignant', he might just as well be discussing Egypt.⁸² This 'catastrophic version of modern history' also persists in the Ottoman context. The Middle East's past risks becoming a victim of its moribund present: pre-national Middle Eastern modernity did not exist in order to condemn late twentieth-century nation-states. The cosmopolitan decline teleology must be overturned if we are to understand the nature of Middle Eastern social pasts before nationality, which demographics and anecdote suggest were diverse and largely functional. In the present day, truly cosmopolitan phenomena of grave importance to the globalized Middle East – most urgently, Zionism and Islamism – can only be recognized as such when the concept is rid of its romanticism.⁸³

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Notes

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¹ This language is from Keith David Watenpaugh, 'Cleansing the Cosmopolitan City: Historicism, Journalism and the Arab Nation in the Post-Ottoman Eastern Mediterranean', *Social History*, 30/1 (2005): 4.

² For an introduction to this vast literature, one place to start is Martha Nussbaum, 'Kant and Cosmopolitanism', in James Bohman and Matthias Lutz-Bachmann (eds), *Perpetual Peace: Essays on Kant's Cosmopolitan Ideal* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 25–57.

³ The watershed moment in recent writing about cosmopolitanism was the publication of Martha Nussbaum, 'Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism', *Boston Review*, 19/5 (1994); the same issue contains responses from Richard Sennett, Judith Butler, Charles Taylor, and many others. The breadth of the political science and philosophy literature on cosmopolitanism is evident in a bibliographic essay: Daniele Archibugi and Mathias Koenig-Archibugi, 'Globalization, Democracy

and Cosmopolis: A Bibliographical Essay', in Daniele Archibugi (ed.), *Debating Cosmopolitanism* (London: Verso, 2003), 273–91. Other collections of note are Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen (eds), *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context and Practice* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002); Diane Morgan and Bary Ganham (eds), *Cosmopolitanism and the Emergence of a Future* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

⁴ On the distinction between cosmopolitanism and globalization, see Craig Calhoun, 'The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travelers: Toward a Critique of Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 101/4 (2002): 870–1. Most scholars of liberalism are in dialogue with John Rawls, whose resistance to any universal scale of analysis creates problems for those interested in global justice.

⁵ This question is treated in particular detail, with special attention to the triumph of liberalism and capitalism, in contributions to Daniele Archibugi and David Held (eds), *Cosmopolitan Democracy: An Agenda for a New World Order* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995); Archibugi, Held, and Martin Köhler (eds), *Re-Imagining Political Community: Studies in Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

⁶ Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (eds), *Cosmopolitanism: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Carol Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi Bhabha, and Dipesh Chakrabarty (eds), 'Cosmopolitanism', *Public Culture*, 12/3 (2000).

⁷ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 49–51 and *passim*. Despite Appadurai's non-Western aim, the cultural capital of the elite is essential to the concept as he deploys it.

⁸ Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 43. Generally speaking, historians of the Western tradition have found cosmopolitanism too restricted (for instance, to aristocracy) or fleeting (for instance, during the early months of the French Revolution) to give these theorists much to work with.

⁹ Peter Van der Veer, 'Colonial Cosmopolitanism', in Vertovec and Cohen (eds), *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism*, 169. In this connection, he mentions Homi Bhabha specifically.

¹⁰ Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 2006).

¹¹ Calhoun, 'Class Consciousness', 872. Note, too, that Calhoun uses 9/11, including its Middle Eastern dimension, to frame his arguments. For an example of similar use of Ottoman cosmopolitanism, see Scott L. Malcolmson, 'The Varieties of Cosmopolitan Experience', in Cheah and Robbins (eds), *Cosmopolitanism*, 238.

¹² A. G. Hopkins, 'Introduction: Interactions between the Universal and the Local', in A. G. Hopkins (ed.), *Global History: Interactions between the Universal and the Local* (London: Palgrave, 2006), 23–4.

¹³ Jonathan Rée, 'Cosmopolitanism and the Experience of Nationality', in Cheah and Robbins (eds), *Cosmopolitanism*, 88.

¹⁴ İlay Örs, 'Coffeehouses, Cosmopolitanism and Pluralizing Modernities in Istanbul', *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 12/1 (2002): 119–45.

¹⁵ This from Khalil Saadeh's English-Arabic dictionary.

¹⁶ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, 'Beyond "Identity"', *Theory and Society*, 29/1 (2000): 2.

¹⁷ Originally a talk at a seminar at Oegstgeest (Netherlands) in 1996, the piece was first published in *Amsterdam Middle East Papers*, 12 (1997). It later appeared as 'Cosmopolitanism and the Middle East', in Roel Meijer (ed.), *Cosmopolitanism, Identity, and Authenticity in the Middle East* (Richmond/Surrey: Curzon, 1999), 15–33, and then (in a revised form) as 'Middle Eastern Experiences of Cosmopolitanism', in Vertovec and Cohen (eds), *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism*, 32–41.

¹⁸ Zubaida, 'Middle East Experiences' 33; 'Cosmopolitanism', 15.

¹⁹ Zubaida, 'Cosmopolitanism', 17.

²⁰ Zubaida, 'Middle East Experiences', 36.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

²² *Ibid.*, 41.

²³ A different article in the collection extends this logic, stating that cosmopolitanism is only for the courageous rare one.

²⁴ Zubaida, 'Middle East Experiences', 33; 'Cosmopolitanism', 19. Zubaida acknowledges the role of empire: it was Europe's impact on the Middle East in the nineteenth century that actualized rare pockets of elite Ottoman cosmopolitanism, prying open 'breaks' in 'religio-communal boundaries'.

²⁵ Zubaida, 'Middle Eastern Experiences', 41.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 40. My italics.

²⁷ For a brief recent discussion of modern mythologization of tolerance in al-Anandalus, see Maria Jesús Rubiera Mata and Mikel de Epalza, 'Al-Andalus: Between Myth and History', *History and Anthropology*, 18/3 (September 2007): 269–73. Meir Hatina uses cosmopolitanism in his recent article 'Where East Meets West: Sufism, Cultural Rapprochement, and Politics', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 39/3 (August 2007): 389–409. On the Indian Ocean, see Leila Tarazi Fawaz, C. A. Bayly, and Robert Ilbert (eds), *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2002); Engseung Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility Across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006); Edward Simpson and Kai Kresse (eds), *Struggling with History: Islam and Cosmopolitanism in the Western Indian Ocean* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007), which came to press too late to be included in this review.

²⁸ Kenneth McPherson, 'Port Cities as Nodal Points of Change: The Indian Ocean, 1890s–920s', in Fawaz, Bayley, and Ilbert (eds), *Modernity and Culture*, 83. Note too that the sort of encounter and exchange that the former approach describes fits twenty-first century teleologies, while the latter approach is suited only to twentieth-century nationalist teleologies.

²⁹ See, for instance, B. Gounaris, 'Thessaloniki, 1830–1912: History, Economy, Society', in Ioannes K. Chasiotes (ed.), *Queen of the Worthy: Thessaloniki, History and Culture* (Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1997), 156–75; Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); Michael J. Reimer, 'Ottoman–Arab Seaports in the Nineteenth Century: Social Change in Alexandria, Beirut, and Tunis', in Resat Kasaba (ed.), *Cities in the World-System* (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1991), 135–57. For a somewhat more attentive approach to communities, see Mark Mazower, 'Salonica between East and West, 1860–1912', *Dialogos: Hellenic Studies Review*, 1 (1994): 104–27 and various contributions to Robert Escallier and Yvan Gastaut (eds), 'Du cosmopolitisme en Méditerranée', *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, 67 (2003).

³⁰ Khaled Fahmy, 'For Cavafy, with Love and Squalor: Some Critical Notes on the History and Historiography of Modern Alexandria', in Anthony Hirst and Michael Silk (eds), *Alexandria, Real and Imagined* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 272. This contradiction is especially evident where demographic evidence of national diversity is treated as sufficient proof of cosmopolitanism. See in particular Daniel Panzac, 'Alexandrie: évolution d'une ville cosmopolite au XIXe siècle', *Annales Islamologiques*, 14 (1978): 195–215; Robert Mabro, 'Alexandria 1860–1960: The Cosmopolitan Identity', in Hirst and Silk (eds), *Alexandria*, 247–62.

³¹ Zubaida, 'Middle Eastern Experiences', 37.

³² Michael Haag, *Alexandria: City of Memory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 10. Deborah A. Starr, 'Recuperating cosmopolitan Alexandria: Circulation of Narratives and Narratives of Circulation', *Cities*, 22/3 (June 2005): 217.

³³ At least six conferences and edited collections about the city have appeared in the last decade: 'Ala' Khalid (ed.), 'Al-Iskandariya: Tarikh Wa Dalil [Alexandria: A History and a Guide]', *Amkenah*, 7 (2006); Hirst and Silk (eds), *Alexandria*; Jean Leclant (ed.), *Alexandrie : une Mégapole Cosmopolite : Actes du 9ème Colloque de la Villa Kérylos à Beaulieu-Sur-Mer, les 2 & 3 Octobre 1998* (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 1999); Robert Ilbert and Ilios Yannakakis (eds), *Alexandria 1860–1960: The Brief Life of a Cosmopolitan Community* (Alexandria: Harpocrates, 1997); Kenneth Brown and Hannah Davis-Taieb (eds), *Alexandria in Egypt, Mediterranean Méditerranéennes*, 8/9 (1996). See also the forthcoming collection of papers from a 2002 conference at Cornell on 'Cosmopolitan Alexandria', ed. Deborah Starr (Syracuse University Press). On literary Alexandria, see Haag, *Alexandria*; Hala Youssef Halim, 'The Alexandria Archive: An Archaeology of Alexandrian Cosmopolitanism (Egypt)', Ph.D. diss. (UCLA, 2004); Robin Ostle, 'Alexandria: A Mediterranean Cosmopolitan Center of Cultural Production', in Fawaz, Bayley, and Ilbert (eds), *Modernity and Culture*; Deborah Starr, *Remembering Cosmopolitan Egypt: Culture, Society, and Empire* (London: Routledge, 2008).

³⁴ Robert Mabro made this count: see 'Alexandria 1860–1960', 257. On Ilbert's use of Durrell, see also Starr, 'Recuperating Cosmopolitan Alexandria', 223.

- ³⁵ Recent critiques of the prevailing discourse include John Rodenbeck, 'Alexandria in Cavafy, Durrell, and Tsirkas', *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 21 (2001): 141–60; Robert Mabro, 'Nostalgic Literature on Alexandria', in Jill Edwards (ed.), *Historians in Cairo* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2002), 237–65; Khaled Fahmy, 'For Cavafy', in Hirst and Silk (eds), *Alexandria*, 263–80.
- ³⁶ Fahmy, 'Towards a Social History of Modern Alexandria', in Hirst and Silk (eds), *Alexandria*, 281. On the dubious demographics of cosmopolitan Alexandria, see *ibid.*, 288 and *passim*.
- ³⁷ Starr, 'Recuperating Cosmopolitan Alexandria', 224. For other recommendations, see Mabro, 'Nostalgic Literature'; Rodenbeck, 'Alexandria in Cavafy'; Azza Kararah, 'Egyptian Literary Images of Alexandria', in Hirst and Silk (eds), *Alexandria*, 307–21.
- ³⁸ Haag, *Alexandria*, 18. Note the nostalgic continuity with antiquity. Transpose this paragraph to the context of apartheid South Africa, and see how it looks.
- ³⁹ See, for instance, the polyglot household staff described in André Aciman's memoir *Out of Egypt* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1994).
- ⁴⁰ Robert Ilbert, *Alexandrie, 1830–1930: histoire d'une communauté citadine* (Cairo: Institut Français D'archéologie Orientale, 1996); Michael J. Reimer, *Colonial Bridgehead: Government and Society in Alexandria, 1807–1882* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1997).
- ⁴¹ The word 'lost' appears in Watenpaugh, 'Cleansing', 5.
- ⁴² Bruce Alan Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 185.
- ⁴³ Keith David Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).
- ⁴⁴ Marc Baer, 'Globalization, Cosmopolitanism, and the Dönme in Ottoman Salonica and Turkish Istanbul', *Journal of World History*, 18/2 (2007): 141–70. Meanwhile, but for different rhetorical ends, he casts the same elite as marginal provincials, 'quintessential outsiders', when in fact they are mayors and leading officials of the city and ministers in the Ottoman government, possessing luxurious villas. Notably, Mark Mazower's major book *Salonica: City of Ghosts* (London: HarperCollins, 2004), while addressed to a general readership, does not invoke cosmopolitanism.
- ⁴⁵ Baer, 'Globalization', 146, 8.
- ⁴⁶ Baer argues for kinship of his concept of 'indigenous globalization' with Engseng Ho's 'local cosmopolitans'. *Ibid.*, 169. See also Engseng Ho, 'Names beyond Nations: The Making of Local Cosmopolitans', *Études Rurales*, 163/164 (2002): 215–32.
- ⁴⁷ See especially the section on 'Provincializing Istanbul', 159–64. Baer is explicit about his choice to show grief, and pages 159–60 offers a clear illustration of its indispensability in his account.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 169.
- ⁴⁹ He adds Izmir and Istanbul to the list. Henk Driessen, 'Mediterranean Port Cities: Cosmopolitanism Reconsidered', *History and Anthropology*, 16/1 (2005): 134–5.
- ⁵⁰ For another version of grief over 1924, see Örs, 'Coffeehouses', 133.
- ⁵¹ Maya Jasanoff, 'Cosmopolitan: A Tale of Identity from Ottoman Alexandria', *Common Knowledge*, 11/3 (2005): 407.
- ⁵² Alexandria's recent cycles of Muslim-Copt violence are only the most obvious sign of the heterogeneity of the 'native' population. For a cutting critique of writing obsessed with the smell of Alexandria's Arab population, see Khaled Fahmy, 'For Cavafy'; Fahmy, 'Ruh Al-Iskandariya Wa Ra'ihatuha', *Amkenah*, 7 (2006): 57–73.
- ⁵³ Edward W. Said, 'Cairo and Alexandria', *Departures* (May/June 1990), reprinted in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 337–45.
- ⁵⁴ Rodenbeck, 'Alexandria in Cavafy', 153.
- ⁵⁵ Fahmy, 'Towards', 305. The same message appears in 'For Cavafy', 263, though here the nationalism is dated to the 1940s.
- ⁵⁶ The discourse about cosmopolitanism finds a counterpart in Islamist discourse about return to a golden age of Islam that never was.
- ⁵⁷ This description is from Timothy Brennan, 'Cosmopolitanism and Internationalism', in Archibugi (ed.), *Debating Cosmopolitanism*, 43.
- ⁵⁸ They promise subsequent installments: continuing the pattern of invoking suggestive concepts with problematic overtones, the next volume is to bear the title *Cairo Hegemonic*.
- ⁵⁹ Diane Singerman and Paul Amar, 'Introduction: Contesting Myths, Critiquing Cosmopolitanism, and Creating the New Cairo School of Urban Studies', in Diane Singerman and Paul Amar

(eds), *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture, and Urban Space in the New Globalized Middle East* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2006), 29–30.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁶² Anouk de Koning, 'Café Latte and Caesar Salad: Cosmopolitan Belonging in Cairo's Coffee Shops', in Singerman and Amar (eds), *Cairo Cosmopolitan*, 224.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 224–25. Mona Abaza's study of shopping malls echoes many of the same themes.

⁶⁴ Caroline Williams, 'Reconstructing Islamic Cairo: Forces at Work', in Singerman and Amar (eds), *Cairo Cosmopolitan*, 277.

⁶⁵ Galila El Kadi and Dalila ElKerdany, 'Belle-époque Cairo: The Politics of Refurbishing the Downtown Business District', in Singerman and Amar (eds), *Cairo Cosmopolitan*, 345–6.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 368.

⁶⁷ Eric Denis, 'Cairo as Neo-Liberal Capital? From Walled City to Gated Communities', in Singerman and Amar (eds), *Cairo Cosmopolitan*, 49.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁶⁹ Singerman and Amar, 'Introduction', in Singerman and Amar (eds), *Cairo Cosmopolitan*, 18.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 9–10.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 7. My italics.

⁷² Louise Blakeney Williams, 'Overcoming the "Contagion of Mimicry": The Cosmopolitan Nationalism and Modernist History of Rabindranath Tagore and W. B. Yeats', *The American Historical Review*, 112/1 (February 2007): 69–100. This article offers a useful summary discussion of 'new' and 'old' cosmopolitanism in its openings pages.

⁷³ See, for instance, Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, Vol. 2, The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 335–6.

⁷⁴ Ho, *Graves of Tarim*, 31. Note that while Ho flirts with cosmopolitanism, he makes rather more use of the concept of diaspora.

⁷⁵ Philosopher Henry Sidgwick is only one of many who argues that cosmopolitanism entails boundary-free mixing for *everyone*. See Brubaker, *Citizenship*, ix–x.

⁷⁶ This argument appears in Örs, 'Coffeehouses' and guides the *Public Culture* issue on cosmopolitanism. The edited volume *Cosmopolitics* offers a fine example of allowing differences to flourish: not infrequently, its contributors contradict each other.

⁷⁷ See Ulrike Freitag and Nora Lafi, project description: 'Cities Compared: Cosmopolitanism in the Mediterranean and adjacent regions' (2006), <http://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/docs/00/14/93/27/PDF/Freitag-Lafi-Cosmopolitanism.pdf>.

⁷⁸ Driessen, 'Mediterranean Port Cities', 137 and *passim*.

⁷⁹ Calhoun, 'Class Consciousness', 892. Ilbert and Reimer have described the nature of this coalition and its successes in great detail.

⁸⁰ Richard Sennett, 'Cosmopolitanism and the Social Experience of Cities', in Vertovec and Cohen (eds), *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism*, 44–5.

⁸¹ Stuart Hall, 'Political Belonging in a World of Multiple Identities', in Vertovec and Cohen (eds), *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism*, 26–7. This certainly seems a useful model for Baer's *dönme*, who could appear as hybrid and not their own pure distinct essence.

⁸² Peter Fritzsche, 'Specters of History: On Nostalgia, Exile, and Modernity', *The American Historical Review*, 106/5 (2001): 1588. Cosmopolitanism has been a convenient and dangerous label in the modern European context, where (for example) 'cosmopolitan' Jews were perceived as disloyal and threatening to national projects.

⁸³ One example of this kind of argument about cosmopolitan violence over distance is the discussion of recent struggles over space in Ayodhya in Bruce Robbins, 'Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism', in Cheah and Robbins (eds), *Cosmopolitics*, 11.

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