

In 2008, Will Hanley released an incisive critique of the concept of cosmopolitanism in the field of Middle East Studies. His later research on 20<sup>th</sup> century Alexandria, swapped elitism for subaltern cosmopolitanism, but left two sides of the critique unaddressed. Since then, historians of the Middle East have avoided the term rather than debate how to overcome cosmopolitanism as a “label” and its “grieving nostalgia.” This paper envisages a way to think through cosmopolitan labels and nostalgia in order to write histories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Middle East in dialogue with Mediterranean studies. While acknowledging Hanley’s critique, we argue that cosmopolitanism still offers a fruitful entry point into depicting diversity in multilingual, multinational, and multi-faith contexts in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, we argue that “Mediterranean cosmopolitanism” when approached generously rather than through positivist archival lenses, can lead us to capture a yearning for social diversity and as a category of practice that is underpinned by a complex historical strategies, from historians and ordinary subjects looking back at distant pasts that fall under this label. We bring two cases to demonstrate the generous uses of “Mediterranean cosmopolitanism.” Olga Verlato brings focus to the 1900 Cairo-based polyglot Italian publication *Il Cosmopolita*, that articulate a discourse of human familiarity and championing a discourse of ‘Mediterranean sameness.’ Idriss Jebari’s research into Moroccan port city Larache and its present-day nostalgia of Spanish colonialism, as a yearning for diversity that is underpinned by complex historical strategies on social media from ordinary individuals. These two areas aim to restore the dialogue between Middle East history and Mediterranean cosmopolitanism, striking a balance between positivist history – the archive and social class – and the subjectivity of actors in the region, past and present.