and reputation of the source. The final chapter explores the centrality of local places and urban landmarks in recalling and perpetuating tales from the past, a theme which will be familiar to scholars of custom and memory cultures. We also see how Rütiner and his informants skilfully adapted historical narratives, such as the tumultuous town coup of 1491, to fit the needs of the contemporary moment.

One of the central intellectual contributions of the book is Roth's close excavation of the interplay between oral, written and printed cultures. Printed matter was a marginal presence in Rütiner's notebooks, and in a community without a printing press or regular postal service, the citizens of St Gall were highly reliant upon oral informants for their local and international news. In everyday exchanges, such as the telling of jokes, printed matter was liberally adapted to meet the needs of the locality and audience. Moreover, trust in the message 'was invested in specific sources of information, not a specific medium of transmission' (p. 104). In deciding which was the most trustworthy account – be it oral communication, manuscript or print – contemporaries would consider the volume of voices, their proximity to the events they were describing, the reliability of different sources in the chain of information communication and the plausibility of the account according to the hearer's own frame of reference (pp. 127–8).

The Talk of the Town also gives us an interesting perspective of a reformed community. Rütiner was a committed Protestant, with close ties to a wider group of active reformers in the town, including Johannes Kessler, author of a Reformation chronicle, the *Sabbata*. Indeed, various members of this circle were inspired by recent religious change ('wondrous times') to record their experiences in the late 1520s; a decade later, clouded by pessimism about the fate of the reformed movement, their writings dried up. The *Commentationes* gives us some unusual angles on major Reformation figures, from the ground up; as when Rütiner recorded local gossip that Heinrich Bullinger kept an inhospitable household, and Huldrych Zwingli was quarrelsome. This is a superbly written, deeply researched book that will be essential reading for urban historians, scholars of early modern information history and print and of the Reformation.

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Malte Fuhrmann's monograph juxtaposes the trajectories of the three most important cities in the Aegean Sea – Istanbul, Salonika and Izmir – in the decades before World War I. It focuses on their role as port-city nodes in the expanding world-economy. Against this background, European schools, newspapers, cafés and bars, cinemas and operas, shaped – each in their own aleatoric ways – the lives of residents and visitors, from parental agency and pupils' positive experiences

even at the most missionary schools, to the quotidian practices of brewing and drinking beer. The book is full of fascinating vignettes about annual sporting competitions, theatre seasons and great performances by 'Bohemian Orchestras' (p. 260). Fictional characters, like the '*Man without Qualities* on the Bosphorus' Bihruz Bey, expanded the reading public's imaginary of vice, virtue and prospect, civility and civilization (pp. 214–17). Adele Feuer, a real-life female café-owner in Salonika, has a cameo appearance in Fuhrmann's book; as do French and Armenian actresses. And they disappear as quickly as the paper trail in the police or consular records ends (pp. 259–62). Elite women who leave their own historical records, like the Phanariot Grande Dame Demetra Vaka, brandish evidence of local bourgeois class consciousness-*qua*-civilizing mission (pp. 266–87).

For all the fascinating European life stories sketched here, the framing of *Port Cities of the Eastern Mediterranean* is off, both in terms of location and historiographical engagement. For one, Ottomans appear accidental to the cities they organized and inhabited. The book shows us the *dorée* sides of the Ottoman fin de siècle, not the class war undergirding the elite culture in this Aegean triangle of port-cities. Moreover, any reader with a familiarity of Eastern Mediterranean historical geography will be puzzled by the total elision of port-cities to the east of Izmir as well as the sizable recent scholarly literature on them. Fuhrmann's central tenet is that European places of learning or leisure – indeed, the wider pursuit of the 'European Dream' – were the sole game-changers in town. This is a face-value reflection of the largely European sources the book presents.

Fuhrmann displays an initially plausible scepsis towards the explanatory powers of colonial discourse analysis. He provides documentary evidence that reducing late Ottoman maritime cities to their 'semi-colonial aspects' fails to capture the complex human and social interactions at play in fast-changing urban settings. This makes sense from the Palazzo Experimental at Venice where I started to write this review. But it appears less plausible, indeed polemical if not dogmatic, from the vantage point of the German Orient Institute in Beirut where I am now finishing it. Fuhrmann seems to treat critical scholarship in the wake of Edward Said's *Orientalism* as an epistemic threat to the noble goal of reconstructing what was really going on in the notoriously unruly modern world. Phrases like the 'nineteenth-century mind frame' (e.g. pp. 268, 270), elicit little confidence in the book's epistemic alternative.

Fuhrmann understands the three cities in terms of the all too human processes of 'soul-searching, identity-building, curiosity, experiment, despair and line-drawing' (p. 217). Izmir had an early cultural lift-off, while Salonika was a thespian late-comer and Istanbul's theatre scene bossed only from the 1870s. But east of Izmir lies the Oriental abyss, the great analytical void of this book. For example, Aleppo – *the* eastern Mediterranean capital hub since Shakespeare's Othello invoked its Venetian ties while he 'smote' himself to death – pops up out of nowhere as a 'fairly exotic location' (p. 292) whence an influential Italian–Levantine family hailed. Elsewhere, Fuhrmann uses the memoires of a scion of the great Istanbul theatre dynasty, the Naum-Duhanis, but skips over the analytical value of this and other families' Arabic roots east of Izmir. In fact, career bureaucrats from Aleppo, Damascus and Beirut, who became ministers and confidants of Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909), were attractive marriage prospects for European families not least because they could open political doors in Istanbul. Unfortunately, the many ties between Aegean port-cities

and Arab provincial capitals of the late Ottoman empire remain unexplored in this monograph.

What remains of lasting value in Fuhrmann's monograph is the plethora of vignettes that it provides to researchers of fin-de-siècle history and late Ottoman cities.

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Sophie Cooper's *Forging Identities in the Irish World* begins with a brief anecdote about the arrival of John and William Redmond in Chicago after their triumphant tour of Australia in 1884. With them was John's new Australian wife, Johanna. The *Western Catholic* newspaper's pronouncement that there was 'Unity in Trinity' emphasized the strong diasporic links between Ireland, the United States and Australia. This is also the key theme of Cooper's extremely well-written and ambitious analysis of two significant, but occasionally overlooked Irish communities: Melbourne and Chicago. Using each city's urban environment as a case-study, Cooper's monograph follows 90 years of development, competition and collaboration between different groups in each city in order to trace how Irish identities evolved along religious, class-based and gendered trajectories from the pre-Famine era to the founding of the Irish Free State.

A generation of diasporic historians and cultural geographers have called for a combination of transnational and in-depth local studies in order to better understand Irish diasporic communities in different parts of the globe. Cooper's paradigm of 'foundational identity' adds her own twist to these previous analyses, untangling multigenerational 'unconscious and conscious, or passive and active engagement with ethnic identity' in order to construct societies in each urban centre (p. 10). Unlike Sydney or New York City, which both had older, more established populations and class divisions, Melbourne and Chicago offered more fluid social, religious and political opportunities, with each community enjoying the image of a brash, less-refined younger sibling. Cooper engagingly uses this concept of foundational identity throughout the monograph, underscoring her conclusions about multiple influences affecting the Irish in both cities, while simultaneously providing other scholars with a highly useful framework for future transnational and comparative research.

Cooper offers a thematic approach rather than profiling the cities separately. As she herself states, the choice of case-studies for comparative histories are often intentionally chosen to prove the existence of either great similarities or differences (p. 16). She defends her choice of cities in a dedicated chapter that tends to