

Letter from the Editor*

In 2015, 1.3 million people applied for asylum in Europe. The migrants, hailing predominantly from war-torn societies in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan, captivated world attention, with media coverage breathlessly (and voyeuristically) following their movements as they arrived in Turkey, boarded rubber dinghies that crossed the Aegean Sea to Greece, and wended their way towards Germany in human caravans. Not all migrants were able or wanted to resettle in Europe, however, and the effects of this on-going, massive movement of peoples extend far beyond the European continent. What refugees themselves think about their situation – the various labels employed to describe them, the prospects of return, and attitudes toward their fellow countrymen-cum-combatants – has often gone overlooked in the rush to understand how the crisis affects bordering nations and countries in Europe or across the globe.

Associate Editor Kristin Fabbe (Editor of Political, International, and Strategic Studies/Harvard Business School) commissioned contributors for the Special Focus section of this issue to address the geopolitics of refugees and displaced persons, and the Editorial Board will continue to guide our efforts to transform the *Review of Middle East Studies* into a space for critical engagement with significant events past and present. This issue of *RoMES* is thus dedicated to the places and ideas that are often seen as peripheral to the dynamics of forced population movements. Three peer-reviewed articles provide rich case studies on the political and economic ramifications of population movements in the Middle East and North Africa. Kristin Fabbe and Tolga Sinmazdemir survey the views held by Syrian refugees in Turkey on the possibility of postconflict reconciliation; Allison Spencer Hartnett addresses how the influx of Syrian refugees into Jordan has impinged on the opportunities for migrant laborers already living there; and Matt Buehler and Kyung Joon Han plumb the variant perspectives of ordinary Moroccan citizens concerning the regularization of migrants who clandestinely entered the country. Wendy Pearlman's reflective essay rounds out the Special Focus section by tracing the emergence of a new subjectivity of displacement that is distinct from definitions of refugee status circulated in the venues of

* I would like to thank Henry Johnson, who went above and beyond his role as copy editor for this issue, and for his help defining the global import of the refugee crisis.

policy and academe. Collectively, these scholars disrupt common perceptions of the so-called “refugee crisis” and deploy methodologies aimed at destabilizing narratives that privilege the voice of top-down policy-makers or academic analyses. In our Curator’s Corner column, Sarah Rhodes (Refugee Studies Centre Library, Oxford) provides a handy list of digital resources for researching the refugee crisis. We hope these materials will serve future scholarly efforts that take seriously the need to dig beneath the rhetoric to uncover the voices and experiences of peoples living through traumatic upheavals.

Questions of displacement and the effort to foreground mechanisms for resistance in increasingly volatile climates are also key to the essay and interview included in a newly designed section, Research: Bridging Boundaries. Devoted to examples of undergraduate and graduate research, this section is intended to highlight research in early career stages along with collaborative projects between professors and students. Ipek Türeli and Meltem Al (McGill University) take readers on a tour of activist art and modes of urban resistance against neoliberal policies in Istanbul. Their essay captures scenes and spaces in the “periphery” and re-centers them as a stage from which to illuminate the troubled history of neoliberalism more generally. Lauren Broidy’s interview with Anoush Baghdassarian (Claremont McKenna College) dovetails well with our Special Focus section. Baghdassarian discusses her senior thesis project on the long history of displacement of the Syrian-Armenian community and her research challenges, methodologies, and experience in interrogating classroom knowledge through the frameworks adopted by community members themselves.

In this issue’s Pedagogical Perspectives column, Rachel Goshgarian and Neha Vora (Lafayette College) marvelously illustrate the *Review’s* emphasis on the intersection between pedagogical and academic practice by leading readers through their course, “Muslim Girls (Run the World): Gender and Popular Culture from Prophetic Tradition to Arab Futurism.” They discuss how their co-taught course attempts to engage students in the “big ideas” of gender and Islam while modeling interdisciplinary possibilities between the fields of history and anthropology. Goshgarian and Vora illuminate the nexus between gender studies, media studies, art history, and Islamic Studies, demonstrating the importance of multi-perspectival methods to engage students with the history and representation of Islam and gender in pop culture. Their essay addresses the challenges many of us face when tackling complex subjects in the classroom and provides a summary of specific materials included in their syllabus. The Curator’s Corner and

Pedagogical Perspectives columns showcase the intention of *RoMES* to explore our varied roles as researchers and educators and provide models for future engagement.

One consequence of our labors in the classroom, while on the lecture circuit or during travel associated with our profession, has been increased surveillance of intellectual inquiry. We turned to Laurie A. Brand, Chair of MESA's Committee on Academic Freedom (CAF), to share a statement for this issue's example of the various committees or affiliated organizations housed under the umbrella of MESA. Brand identifies CAF's mission as an effort to address violations of academic freedom by circulating letters of protest to the highest government and diplomatic agents of the country where the incident occurs. Her summary of the various cases addressed by CAF indicates the alarming escalation of these violations, and *RoMES* would like to thank CAF for their diligent monitoring of academic freedom in North America and around the globe.

Finally, while *RoMES* has traditionally sought to review 20 to 30 publications in each issue, we have also extended our focus to visual media and cinema, revitalized our emphasis on art and architecture, and defined a performing arts position through new appointments to our Editorial Board. We thus introduce our first Field Spotlight to acknowledge the outstanding work of Performing Arts Associate Editor, David McDonald (Indiana University). The reviewers he commissioned move from pop culture in Iran to Greek Orthodox music in Ottoman Istanbul, explore political performance in the Syrian uprising, and elucidate the role of Andalusian nostalgia in musical forms that traverse the Mediterranean. The Field Spotlight serves as an example of the range of publications present in our book review section and seeks to acknowledge the diligent labor of our Associate Editors to bring the dynamism of Middle East Studies into the pages of the *Review*.

As we work toward shaping the review section into a space in which to interrogate trends in scholarly inquiry, Leila Faraskh's (University of Massachusetts, Boston) review essay "Understanding 50 Years of Israeli Occupation of Palestinian Land" uses books by Mehran Kamrava and Gershon Shafir to reflect on the historiographic politics of occupation. Faraskh's review essay also serves as a preview for *RoMES* 53.1 – a themed issue that revolves around the antecedents and consequences of the United States embassy move from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Raja Shehadeh, Omar M. Dajani, Michael Dumper, Matthew Victor Kattan, Mourad Suleiman, Yousef Munayyer, and Meron Rapoport will bring what we hope will be a revelatory set of perspectives to bear on this dramatic alteration

of the cultural, legal, religious, and political landscape. Pivoting from questions concerning human rights and civil liberties, the intersection between urban planning and ethno-nationalism, the theological and legal impacts of the move, and the difficulties faced by journalists reporting from within urban conflict zones, the Special Focus will bring one of the most significant MENA events into the pages of the *Review*. Jeremy Kargon's (Morgan State University) Curator's Corner on yet another institutional move, that of the New National Library of Israel, and Dan Segal's (Pitzer College) reflections on teaching Palestine for our Pedagogical Perspectives column will round out the leitmotif of the Spring issue.

It is our hope that these various components of the *Review* embody our general mission to bridge divides between fields, publics, and geographies in Middle East Studies and will model an online presence capable of shaping academic and public discourse. As always, it is our Editorial Board that sustains and energizes *RoMES*, and we are delighted to introduce Jörg Matthias Determann (Arabian Peninsula/Virginia Commonwealth University, Qatar), Anastassia Botchkareva (Art, Archaeology, and Architecture/New York University), and Guy Burak (Islamic Studies and Law/New York University). With these new members, we now have a full Editorial Board to help guide initiatives to better integrate and diversify the expertise presented in the *Review of Middle East Studies*. We look forward to working with MESA members to ensure that the *RoMES* pages consistently open new intellectual pathways. ✨

Heather Ferguson
Claremont McKenna College