

From the Editor

In This Issue

The current issue of the *Review* continues the theme “Arab Spring” begun in the last issue. The idea originated in the early months of 2011, following the surprising early successes of popular movements to end autocratic postcolonial regimes. However, as the special section “Cultural Production in the Arab Spring Part I” went to press last July, events on the ground in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, the Yemen and elsewhere cast serious doubts on the accuracy of the “spring” metaphor, which to many observers seemed to relapse into “winter” all too soon. In light of growing conflict over the direction of changes taking place in the Middle East and North Africa in the summer of 2013, the editorial staff invited the authors of the Arab Spring articles in volume 47 (1) to post short updates in the current issue. Brinda Mehta captures the more sober tones of the current moment, when she observes that “Laila Soliman’s prophetic words in *Lessons in Revolting*, ‘this revolution is far from over’ (2011) have come to fruition.” In presenting these articles on cultural production and social changes taking place in the “Arab Spring” and its aftermath, the real message is not only the poetry, music, cartoons, video. All of this is still evolving and will not be easily silenced for long. Audience reception on the streets and through social media such as Twitter is also an important aspect.

In the opening essay of this issue, Charles W. Anderson looks at the Arab Spring through the lens of social movement theory, in order to appreciate better the role of “youth” in the Middle East as a significant cohort of actors in contemporary events. The second article is a revised reprint of James B. Hoesterey’s essay, “Is Indonesia a Model for the Arab Spring?” At the final stage of production, proof readers did not catch that a page in the penultimate camera-ready copy was missing from Hoesterey’s fine essay from Volume 47

(1). With my sincere apologies to Prof. Hoesterey and to readers, the essay is reprinted here in its entirety, with the missing page and a brief update.

A follow-up special section on “Cultural Production in the Arab Spring Part II”—presents three essays that were originally intended to appear in Volume 47 (1). An overabundance of essays and book reviews necessitated delaying their publication, now appearing as “Part II” in the current issue. In “Graffiti Networks in Cairo,” Yakein Abdelmagid examines the formation and functions of the group of artists known as “Mona Lisa”; he describes and illustrates how some of their projects have involved the youth and ordinary Egyptians in vulnerable neighborhoods in self-expression in response to the power of state authority. Rafika Zahrouni probes the role of theatre and drama recently in Tunisia as a cultural form of resistance to state oppression as well as a challenge to the rise of Salafism. Mona Hashesh analyzes the narrative and the symbolism of Egyptian playwright Mohamed el-Gheity’s play “Ward al-Janā’in” (the Rose Garden), which was performed in Cairo in the late spring of 2011. All three essayists end with the admission that the original impetus of popular resistance through art has been dampened by recent political developments. Nonetheless, the process of artists endeavoring to “speak truth to power” is hardly silenced. Brinda Mehta ends her postscript on the fate of efforts like Laila Soliman’s revolutionary theatre in Cairo with the notice: “To be continued....” Finally, a second special section on “Mapping Lebanon” presents three essays from an American Association of Geographers workshop panel that, in the words of the introduction, “explored the intricate links between Lebanese historical specificities, historiographies, and the country’s sociopolitical organization amidst the complex geopolitical context in which Lebanon is embedded and remains an active stakeholder.”

Contributing to the Review

The editors invite readers to participate in the production of *RoMES* by writing reviews of books, films, internet resources and other media, and by submitting articles. A list of books received may be found on the *RoMES* link on the MESA Website: <http://www.mesa.arizona.edu/publications/review/index.html>. Contact the associate editor in your field or discipline (a current list of associate editors by field and discipline appears on the inside front cover of this issue of *RoMES*). Associate editors are tasked with assigning books to reviewers and guiding them through the process of formatting, editing and submitting reviews to the editorial office at Virginia Tech. If you would like to review a work that does not appear on the “Books Received” MESA Website, send the appropriate associate editor basic information about the work with copy to romes.vt@gmail.com; upon instruction from the associate editor, a

copy of the book will be ordered and sent to you along with guidelines for preparing the review. If you are new to reviewing for *RoMES*, provide the appropriate associate editor with a *brief* description of your research and scholarly interests, to keep on file.

Beginning with Volume 48 in the summer of 2014, the *Review* will offer readers “Brief Notices” on recent works in addition to the longer reviews and review essays that have been the staple of this publication since its publication as the *MESA Bulletin*. The addition of several brief notices will enable the editors to provide information on a larger number and range of scholarly materials on the Middle East appearing each year. The Brief Notices will be written by Virginia Tech students in Middle East studies working with Middle East Working Group faculty mentors and supervised by the Undergraduate Research Institute at Virginia Tech. Final responsibility for content will lie with the Editor. The idea for adding Brief Notices to *RoMES* came from William Ochsenwald, Associate Editor for History on the *RoMES* editorial board. Many thanks, Bill!

The Editor also welcomes the submission of articles and essays. The *RoMES* Webpage states: “MESA policy has established the focus of *RoMES* as the state of the craft in all fields of Middle East studies.” The scope the *Review* is primarily the modern period, but also includes scholarship on premodern topics, including Islamic studies more generally. In addition to standard subjects in Middle East area studies, the editors invite articles on new and evolving topics and problems in research, reports from the field, new methods and technologies in research and teaching about the Middle East, and ethical issues in scholarship on the Middle East. Those submissions accepted for publication will receive a double blind outside review. All submissions should be sent by electronic email attachment in MS Word format to: Richard C. Martin, Editor: romes.vt@gmail.com. ✂

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Editor

