

EDITORIAL FOREWORD

This issue is focused on reframing analytical categories in ways different from how scholars have used them, and mechanisms of power in juxtaposition to how states intended them. We open with two articles on “Reading in Translation.” Anne-Marie E. McManus’s “Scale in the Balance: Reading with the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (‘The Arabic Booker’)” focuses on the International Prize for Arabic Fiction, or IPAF. Founded in 2007 with funding from Dubai and based on the more well-known Man Booker Prize, the IPAF is awarded to one Arabic novel each year. The prize supports that novel’s translation into English and catapults it from the national domain into a global marketplace of readers whose reading practices, McManus suggests, have already been shaped by the postcolonial Anglophone novel. Arguing that methods inherited from postcolonial studies are inadequate for addressing these modes of reading and interpretation (i.e., the national and the global), McManus develops a comparative “scale-based method” combining insights from postcolonial and world literary theory and from area studies, which she brings to bear on two IPAF-winning Egyptian novels: Baha’ Taher’s *Wahat al-Ghurub* (*Sunset Oasis*) and Saud Alsanousi’s *Saq al-Bambu* (*The Bamboo Stalk*). In her analysis of these literary works, McManus shows us why “a stark either/or between national and world literary frames . . . cannot apprehend the ways in which a movement between them is institutionalized in bodies such as the IPAF, nor can it grapple with the implications for reading.” “Reading with the IPAF,” she suggests, requires instead “a resituation of national frames, institutionally and hermeneutically, within the nodal relation the IPAF represents.”

From the translation of Arabic literature into English and its movement into the global marketplace, we move to the translation of Zionist thought into Arabic and into the setting of Beirut. Jonathan Gribetz’s article, “When *The Zionist Idea* Came to Beirut: Judaism, Christianity, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization’s Translation of Zionism,” is about the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Research Center’s translation into Arabic of Arthur Hertzberg’s 1959 compilation of central Zionist texts, which he accompanied with author biographies. Gribetz shows that the Research Center’s translators and editors, in their preparation of the text, departed from Hertzberg’s original in their rendition of the biographies. In contrast to Hertzberg, they emphasized the importance of religion in both the lives and ideological visions of the Zionist authors. Importantly, the PLO Research Center translators and editors were all Christians. Gribetz argues that “the researchers’ concern about the status of Christians as a religious minority among Palestinians and other Arabs and certain deeply rooted Christian ideas about the nature of Judaism may help to account for the particular view of Zionism that the Research Center developed in its—and in the PLO’s—foundational years.” In considering the Palestinian Christian understanding of Zionism and, ultimately, of the Palestinian condition, Gribetz contributes to scholarship exploring the importance of religion and religious communal identification to the articulation and practice of secular Palestinian nationalism and other nationalisms.

The next section, “Politics of the Press,” begins with Houssine Alloul and Roel Markey’s “‘Please Deny These Manifestly False Reports’: Ottoman Diplomats and the Press in Belgium (1850–1914),” which examines a different kind of interpretive reading: how Ottoman envoys to Belgium during the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century read and monitored the Belgian press, related noteworthy content on the empire to Istanbul, and, when instructed, attempted to counteract it through social and political networks they had established. Alloul and Markey argue that while historical scholarship on the Ottoman Empire and particularly Ottoman foreign policy has explored Ottoman efforts at image building abroad and, relatedly, at influencing the foreign press, little attention has been paid to the empire’s institutionalization of press management. Examining Ottoman press management in Belgium as a case study, the authors show that diplomats, as “brokers between Istanbul and ‘liberal’ Belgium’s thriving newspaper business,” were central players in this project. Yet despite “the improvisatory labor of the empire’s diplomats,” in the long run “Ottoman efforts to counter Belgian (and European) news coverage of the empire had little impact and occasionally even worked counterproductively, generating the very Orientalist images they aimed to combat in the first place.”

Aaron Rock-Singer, in “Prayer and the Islamic Revival: A Timely Challenge,” explores how in Egypt, in a context of increasing state repression during the latter portion of the Anwar al-Sadat period, Islamists transformed the *zuhr* (afternoon) prayer into a project of Muslim subject formation that challenged state authority. Historical literature on Egypt has shown how the rise and expansion of the modern Egyptian state in the 19th and 20th centuries involved, in part, the establishment of new temporal and spatial arrangements that would produce new kinds of subjects obedient to the state. As Rock-Singer suggests, it was these very arrangements that Islamist groups including the Muslim Brotherhood targeted through a major campaign, which he traces via the Islamist press, to guarantee space for the *zuhr* prayer in Egyptian state institutions and time for it in official work and school schedules. Building on recent scholarship that has analyzed similar projects of subject formation at the fringes of the Egyptian secular order, Rock-Singer’s discussion takes us into the heart of state institutions. The performance of prayer, he points out, became “a hybrid practice that disrupted the temporal and spatial claims of a state-sponsored bureaucratic order to produce national subjects within public schools and bureaucratic institutions.” Yet even as “the temporality of this Islamist project ostensibly emerged from the ‘natural’ rhythm of daily prayer,” he points out, it ultimately replicated state logic.

The third section is titled “Development and Humanitarian Aid.” In “The Islamic Republic of Iran’s Foreign Policy and Construction Jihad’s Developmental Activities in Sub-Saharan Africa,” Eric Lob examines Iranian foreign policy between the 1980s and the 2000s through the prism of complex realism. He departs from the scholarly literature on this subject, which concentrates on Iranian military or financial aid, ideological propagation, and religious proselytization among Shi‘i communities or in predominantly Shi‘i regions of the Middle East, to turn to Iranian development programs in predominantly Sunni or non-Muslim regions of Sub-Saharan Africa. Lob’s focus is Construction Jihad (Jahad-i Sazandigi), a development organization founded just after the Iranian Revolution. Its purpose, after it was transformed into a state ministry in 1983, was to expand Iranian influence in the Muslim and developing worlds. Following Construction

Jihad's pathways through parts of Africa, he argues that rather than "covert arms trafficking and more overt ideological propagation, development has enabled the Islamic Republic to make significant inroads into the continent due to Africa's sizeable agrarian economies, widespread rural poverty, and formidable developmental challenges." These ongoing development efforts have benefitted Iran economically and politically, but they have also been constrained by "the limits of South–South cooperation, Iran's status as a middle-income country, and tighter sanctions against its nuclear program."

Sophia Hoffmann's article, "International Humanitarian Agencies and Iraqi Migration in Preconflict Syria," examines what she considers the humanitarian construction of an Iraqi refugee crisis in Syria in 2007 and the interventions intended to solve it. Hoffmann observes that the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees who arrived in Syria after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 faced relatively few obstacles to social integration and in finding housing and work. The relative ease of their relocation was consistent with "historical cosmopolitanism" in the region. However, it was also largely attributable to the illiberal Syrian state's openness to citizens of Arab states, who were not considered foreigners, and its *laissez-faire* approach to governance that required of subjects only that they observe its "red lines" around behavior. Evaluating the situation of these refugees through a liberal frame, the international humanitarian agencies that later entered Syria constructed them as beneficiaries of aid and subjected them to a liberal mode of governance whose biopolitical tactics demanded new kinds of practices. The humanitarian liberal governance of Iraqi refugees in Syria further set them apart from their Syrian neighbors. Hoffmann argues that the operation of such governance in illiberal environments "creates powerful incentives for people to adjust to liberal subjecthood, but also excludes and punishes certain identities and behaviors, which limits its appeal."

Hoffmann's critique of humanitarianism segues into the issue's roundtable on the "Problematics of Human Rights and Humanitarianism." The ongoing refugee crisis has seen streams of individuals and families, fleeing violence at home, attempt to cross national borders and continents on foot, in vehicles and trains, and by sea to find refuge in near and distant lands. As artist Sundus Abdul Hadi, whose painting juxtaposing the refugees at sea with the role of warships in the crisis appears on the issue cover, describes: "On overloaded rubber boats, lives are risked everyday, smuggled, extorted, traumatized, and sometimes lost... Nameless. Numbers."¹ The scale of this mass movement of people from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, and elsewhere recalls World War I and World War II, both of which ushered in new legal and political grammars, concepts, and regimes that radically reorganized the world. We asked six scholars in a range of disciplines to reflect, from today's vantage point, on new ways of thinking about human rights and humanitarianism and how they are mobilized in different temporal and geographical settings.

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¹ Sundus Abdul Hadi's personal website, accessed 10 January 2016, <http://www.sundusabulhadi.com>.