Review of Middle East Studies (2023), **57**, 1–2
doi:10.1017/rms.2024.34

Letter from the Editor

Heather Ferguson

Claremont McKenna College
Email: hferguson@cmc.edu

All academic journals have histories, and the history of the *Review of Middle East Studies* (*RoMES*) embodies both the potential and the challenges that accompany scholarly publications. Long-time readers may have noticed that over the decades *RoMES* has morphed from a Bulletin to a collection of scholarly reviews, and finally to a journal that provides snapshots of our rich interdisciplinary field and the varied trajectories of its members. For the past six years our editorial team has worked together to produce content that engages the geographic, institutional, and disciplinary contexts that together shape the Middle East Studies Association. We have highlighted film and cinema studies, pushed to include recurring columns attentive to pedagogical practices and to the politics of curation, and foregrounded topical roundtables that engage contemporary issues via the research expertise of our members. Together, we have also navigated shifts in journal production protocols, a global pandemic, escalating attacks on academic freedom, rising global ethnonationalism, and genocides past and present.

The current issue of *RoMES* embraces this variegated past and charts a new possible future. Our Special Focus roundtable moves into terrain that, at first glance, might seem a departure for our readers. For the first time this section engages with my personal scholarly commitments as a historian of Ottoman imperial dynamics. As Editor of *RoMES* I am perhaps inordinately proud that unless a MESA member knows me personally, or via my professional publication and presentation history, they would never suspect that I am an early modern historian of the Ottoman Empire. Why now reveal myself, you might ask. Our goal in this issue is to propose that *RoMES* can also be a space to interrogate established traditions within our respective fields. The main organizers and contributors to this issue's Special Focus section have long sought to integrate the historiography of regions separated by linguistic and nationalist divides. Yasir Yılmaz (Austrian Academy of Sciences) engaged contributors capable of transcending historiographic divides between Habsburg and Ottoman imperial histories. In partnership with the preeminent Habsburg historian Georg Michels (University of California, Riverside), *RoMES* presents the first ever roundtable dedicated to a period of history best explored through collaborative scholarly endeavors. Titled "Unveiling Uncharted Realms: The Ottoman Grand Vizierate in Comparative Perspective and the Köprülü Dynasty Revisited," the contributors engage a period from 1656 to 1710 in which members of the Köprülü family served as Ottoman grand viziers. This may seem like a niche topic, yet bear in mind that Georg

© The Author(s), 2024. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of Middle East Studies Association of North America

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. IP address: 18.97.14.86, on 15 Sep 2026 at 14:35:59, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/rms.2024.34

Michels has, throughout his career, struggled to "enter" Ottoman-centric academic circles to present an argument that redefines a key period in Ottoman imperial histories. While it is true that paleographic experts across the Ottoman and Habsburg imperial landscapes have long studied this crucial borderland, as Yılmaz expertly argues in his introduction, the Köprülü period remains entrenched in uninterrogated "widely accepted facts." *RoMES* is dedicated to destabilizing the "accepted" in favor of collaborative research endeavors that chart new paths for future scholarship. Our hope is that the Special Focus section of this issue will inspire future contributors to explore the "accepted" via collaborative work that crosses geographic, institutional, and linguistic divides.

We commissioned our "Curator's Corner" contributors with this Special Focus on the Köprülüs in mind. Richard Antaramian, Dzovinar Derderian, and David Gutman's "Reflecting on Armenians in Ottoman Historiography" reminds us of other possible gaps in the research trajectories of the fields we build our professional careers on. With extraordinary dexterity, they walk us through the "growing visibility of Armenians in Ottoman historiography" and ask why it is that "historical scholarship on Armenians has yet to have a transformative effect on the frameworks used to study the Ottoman Empire's history?" In combination, our Special Focus section and Curator's Corner remind us of the urgency to challenge entrenched scholarly traditions that privilege certain archives, voices, and histories over others. In a moment that MESA members face escalating attacks on our rights as scholars and teachers to engage difficult histories and troubled presents, our hope is that this issue of *RoMES* demonstrates that "niche" topics also provide a pathway for collaborative work that transcends divisions.

As part of the *RoMES* mission, we also include the work of five undergraduates who presented their research at the annual MESA conference in 2023. MESA's Committee for Undergraduate Research has long been a key partner of *RoMES* during my tenure as Editor. This issue reinforces this partnership by including a "retrospective" of the annual poster sessions by Mekarem Eljamal, once a contributor and now a scholar reflecting on the continued importance of our dedication to undergraduate learning.

Finally, we look forward to upcoming issues that will be published in quick succession, including one dedicated to academic and pedagogical practice in the post-October 7 world, and two issues foregrounding MESA's Global Scholars fellows. In combination, our hope is that the current and upcoming pages of *RoMES* continue to embody our collective aspiration to reveal new stories as a method to build new possible futures.

Interested in reading the latest from RoMES? Follow us on Twitter at @RevoMES. Any questions or inquiries concerning content or potential submissions should be sent via email to Editor Heather Ferguson and Managing Editor Ghayde Ghraowi at romes@cmc.edu. We are especially interested in submissions for our two recurring columns "Pedagogical Perspectives" and "Curator's Corner."

Cite this article: Ferguson H (2023). Letter from the Editor. *Review of Middle East Studies* **57**, 1–2. https://doi.org/10.1017/rms.2024.34

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. IP address: 18.97.14.86, on 15 Sep 2026 at 14:35:59, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/rms.2024.34