

Leila Fawaz

EDITORIAL

As the new editor of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, my goal is to maintain the excellent reputation and standards of the *Journal* set by its departing editor. To achieve that task constitutes a tall order for just about anyone in the field, as Peter von Sivers has done such an admirable job over the past five years of promoting the *Journal's* international reputation. Under his editorship, the quality, number, and scope of submitted manuscripts and reviews, as well as the *Journal's* readership, have increased. Scholars from the Middle East have taken a more active part than ever before, as evaluators, reviewers, and authors. By now, the *Journal* covers all the disciplines, geographical areas, and historical periods encompassed by Middle Eastern studies, and it is the undisputed pacesetter in the field. Only now that I am beginning to grapple with the diverse and enormous tasks its editorship involves, do I begin to have a sense of the hard work, dedication, and editorial vision that went into making this happen. The standards set by Peter von Sivers and his two illustrious predecessors are formidable, but the task that lies ahead of me has also been eased by his exceptional efforts to make the transition as smooth and efficient as possible in such a major enterprise. I thank him and the *IJMES* office at the University of Utah for their cooperation; I also thank the MESA Board of Directors and Tufts University for their votes of confidence. I very much look forward to working with the *Journal's* excellently qualified Editorial Board and with Margaret Ševčenko as new consultant editor. I also welcome Eleanor Cleary as *IJMES* secretary and Lobna Reda as my research assistant. For assistance with transliteration, I will turn to Michael Hopper, Arabic Language Cataloger, at the Middle East Department of Harvard College Library; I thank him, Fawzi Abdulrazzak, and David Partington for their cooperation. Most of the manuscripts to appear in this issue and the next three have been accepted by my predecessor, which will ease the transition as well as weigh the odds in favor of a continued dynamic and exciting growth of the *Journal* in the coming years. Wish me luck and, more to the point, help make it happen by submitting to the *Journal* the best you can produce.

From my own service on the Editorial Board, I know how exciting it can be to help shape a field and bring to light new research and new points of view, but I also know well that the best of editors can only do so much, and the quality of manuscripts depends, ultimately, on the state of the field itself and of the research being done in it. Scholarship on the Middle East has been broadened

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from traditional Oriental studies to include multidisciplinary efforts in order to understand and approach the peoples and cultures of the Middle East from within, with greater understanding, perhaps, than heretofore. *IJMES* will continue to encourage the submission of manuscripts that combine the use of source materials with interpretive analysis and innovative conclusions, to cover neglected areas of research and interpretation, and to bring to light the research of promising young scholars as well as that of established specialists. The present multidisciplinary make-up of the *Journal* will be maintained, although on very rare and exceptional occasions, a whole volume might be devoted to a particular theme that promises to engage the interest of the entire field.

From an editor's point of view, there is still much to be done if the standards of the *Journal* are to be raised even higher. Part of the problem lies precisely in the multidisciplinary make-up of the *Journal* that is one of its virtues. While the span of topics reflects the background of its readership, it can also lead to an excessive specialization that discourages scholars of one field to read into the others. The symptoms of the problem are discontent with the editor's choices of articles and complaints about the boring nature of their contents. Part of the problem also lies with the field of Middle East Studies itself. Despite the progress of its scholarship, we are still a long way from being pathfinders in the world of scholarship generally, and, to that extent, any weakness in the *Journal's* contents merely reflects the state of the field; generally, we need more analytical contributions, more comparative contributions, and more exciting and readable ones than we are often now receiving. Ideally, manuscripts accepted for publication in the *Journal* should be exciting not only for specialists in some one of our various subdisciplines, but also to researchers in other fields. We are all aware that there is room for improvement. Let us continue to work together to make it happen, for the future quality of the *Journal* depends as much on you as it does on any editor.

I look very much forward to working with you.